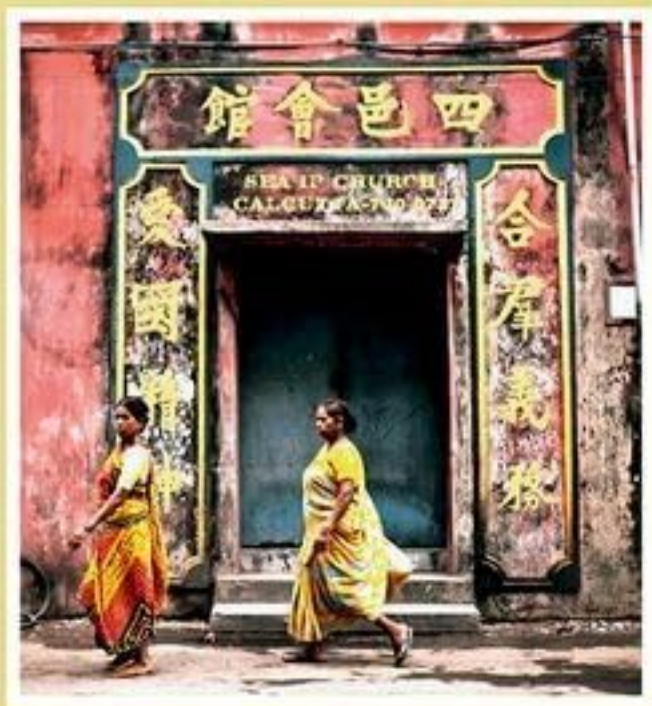


CHINESE SOJOURNERS IN WARTIME RAJ

1942–1945



CAO YIN

OXFORD

Chinese Sojourners in Wartime Raj,
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YIN CAO

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Acknowledgements

When I was writing the last chapter of my first book, which is about how the Sikh migrants in Shanghai were recruited into the Indian National Army (INA), I found an interesting episode. In November 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose, the leader of the INA, paid a visit to Nanjing at the invitation of the Wang Jingwei Regime. In a public broadcasting program, Bose blamed the Chinese Nationalist government in Chongqing for allowing a large number of Chinese troops and civilians to enter India to strengthen British colonial rule. Did the Chinese Nationalist government really intend to help the British in India? How did the British and Indians interact with the Chinese in India during the Second World War? And what was the experience of these Chinese soldiers and civilians in such a foreign land? With all of these questions in mind, I began to write this book.

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1

Introduction

Colonial Anxieties and Nationalist Ambitions

In January 1945, the assistant director of the Intelligence Bureau at the Home Department of the Government of India, J. R. DeChazal, wrote a report to the undersecretary of the government A. W. Lovatt regarding the grave situation of the Chinese migration in India. DeChazal warned, "There are good reasons for believing that one of the aims of Chinese policy is to establish for its overseas nationals, a special position amounting in practice to a kind of extraterritoriality, in the life of the country in which they are guests ... we shall soon find ourselves faced with Chinese enclaves, difficult to penetrate."¹

That same month, the Chinese Nationalist government dispatched 22 Chinese cadets to Madras to receive training in modern military expertise and skills. The Nationalist government expected that the cadets would play an essential role in defending and rebuilding China with the knowledge learned after the war ended. On their arrival in Madras, the Chinese cadets were mistreated by the local British officials. They were not allowed to telegraph their colleagues back in China. The British authorities also censored all their mail. British agents closely watched the outdoor activities of the cadets. In early February 1945, the cadets were sent back to China. They were accused of conducting anti-British activities in India. The Chinese authorities took this incident as evidence of the century-long British imperialism against the Chinese.²

The British colonial authorities did not believe that the Chinese came to India only to learn skills. In the minds of DeChazal and his colleagues, the Chinese Nationalist government had a grand conspiracy against the

¹ NAI, Home_Political_E_1945_NA_F-16-49, from J. R. de Chazal to A. W. Lovatt, 30 January 1945.

² AH, 020-011903-0008, Waijiaobu, Yinren kedai wo zhongyangjunxiao paiwang yindu shouxun xuesheng, 24 February 1945.

sovereignty of the British Raj.³ The Chinese authorities, on the other hand, were clear that they were utilizing the resources in India to train their professionals and to obtain modern technology. They wanted to use the knowledge and skills learned to meet their nationalist agendas in China. In other words, the Chinese did not understand the worries of the British, and the British failed to understand the intentions of the Chinese.

The different perceptions regarding the Chinese sojourners in India during the Second World War and the ensuing miscalculations and conflicts between the Chinese and British authorities are the central theme of this book.⁴ Unlike previous studies of diplomatic history that usually take the 'top-down approach' and focus on high-profile politicians, this book focuses on ordinary people such as sailors, smugglers, deserters, and pilots. It demonstrates that the personal choices and actions of these ordinary Chinese in India motivated the Chinese and British authorities to take measures to control and discipline them.⁵ Their presence in India

³ This book uses both 'British Raj' and 'India' to refer the South Asian subcontinent ruled by the British Crown. Therefore, 'India' in this research refers to the geographical space that includes Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

⁴ In a broad definition, sojourners indicate those who go to foreign countries and reside there temporarily. Wang Gungwu rightly points out that most Chinese overseas in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were sojourners who regarded their stay in foreign lands as temporary and thought of returning to China once they achieved their goals (mostly for economic success). Most Chinese sojourners in India, as Wang Gungwu describes, were ordinary laborers, shopkeepers, merchants, and small-business owners. Nevertheless, this book focuses on a specific group of Chinese sojourners whose presence in India was largely the result of the Second World War. In other words, the Second World War context gave rise to certain wartime networks and sites such as the Yunnan-Burma Road, the Hump air route, the Ramgarh training center, and the Lahore Elementary Flying Training School that facilitated the activities of those wartime sojourners. We must bear in mind that most Chinese sojourners in India at the time were not smugglers, deserters, or gangsters. However, those people mentioned above did draw the most serious attention from both Chinese and British authorities and influenced both authorities' policies. That said, although those Chinese smugglers, deserters, and gangsters cannot be taken as the whole Chinese sojourner community in wartime India, they are undoubtedly the most significant group and therefore are the main subjects of this book.

⁵ It is important to point out here that the identities of the Chinese in India in the 1940s were ambiguous and complicated. Chinese refugees from Hong Kong and Southeast Asia claimed themselves as British subjects. In the nineteenth century, Chinese Indians whose ancestors migrated to India regarded themselves as ethnic Chinese but India as their hometown. And Tibetans were not considered by the British authorities as Chinese. For the postcolonial Indian state, all (Han) Chinese in India, whether they were sojourners or settlers for generations, were taken as 'Non-Indian National'. In this book, the Chinese sojourners indicate those who regarded themselves as Chinese citizens, treated by both Chinese and British authorities as Chinese citizens, and not lived in India before the War of Resistance. Such definition makes the subject of this book different from those that study the Chinese immigrants in India from the eighteenth century onward. For the multifaceted identities of the Chinese in India, see Zhang

also deepened the misunderstanding between the two powers.⁶ This misunderstanding provided ordinary people with opportunities to further their interests, whether successfully or not.

The Colonial Anxieties

A story of the British policies towards the Chinese sojourners in India may need to begin with a discussion of the British colonial anxieties. Why were the British authorities so worried about Chinese activities in the Raj? Given the fact that the Chinese population in India never exceeded 100,000, a negligible number compared with India's total population, they posed no substantial threat to colonial rule. The colonial anxieties over their existence were somewhat questionable, if not groundless. The answer may lie in the very root of colonialism.

Bernard Cohn argues that the fundamental structural changes in Indian social relations during the colonial period cannot be attributed solely to British military conquest and political dominance. The British introduced a new set of revenue and legal systems that dramatically facilitated and strengthened their colonial rule. More implicitly but equally important, the British believed that they could understand the local society and culture by referring to their forms of knowledge in Europe.

Xing, *The Chinese Community in Calcutta: Preservation and Change* (Halle: Universitätsverlag Halle-Wittenberg, 2015), 48–58.

⁶ This author admits that the issue of the Chinese sojourners in wartime India alone cannot fully explain the India-China misunderstandings and miscalculations from the 1940s. The Chinese government's (both the Nationalist and the Communist) state-building projects in Xinjiang and Tibet in the twentieth century are also important factors that give rise to the British/Indian anxieties. There existed a large body of scholarship over the links between the Chinese state-building in Xinjiang and Tibet and the India-China rivalry, see Lin Hsiao-ting, *Tibet and Nationalist China's Frontier* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006); Andres Rodriguez, 'Building the nation, serving the frontier: Mobilizing and reconstructing China's borderlands during the War of Resistance', *Modern Asian Studies* 45:2 (2011): 345–376; Justin Jacobs, 'Nationalist China's "Great Game": Leveraging foreign explorers in Xinjiang, 1927–1935', *Journal of Asian Studies* 73:1 (2014): 43–64; Chang Jui-te, 'An Imperial Envoy: Shen Zonglian in Tibet, 1943–1946', in Hans van de Ven, Diana Lary, and Stephen MacKinnon eds., *Negotiating China's Destiny in World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 52–69; Berenice Guyot-Rechard, *Shadow States: India, China and the Himalayas, 1910–1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Few, however, have ever paid attention to the issue of the Chinese sojourners in wartime India. This study tries to balance the long-accepted assumption that it was the border issue alone that shaped the Sino-India tensions throughout the twentieth century by providing an alternative angle that involves the sojourners.

Following this logic, the colonizers appropriated Indian cultural norms into an experience better suited to their colonial agendas.

Furthermore, the understanding of local norms and culture was used to classify the colonized subjects into various categories and identities. The classificatory regimes of the colonial authorities played a significant role in shaping modern Indian society as a whole. For Cohn, the British authorities intentionally and systematically initiated a colonial project of accumulating, appropriating, and manipulating indigenous knowledge that had extraordinary effects on almost all aspects of the social life in modern and contemporary South Asia.⁷

Nicholas Dirks further develops Cohn's idea by arguing that the caste system, the central symbol of the Indian society today, was appropriated, restructured, and even invented by the British colonial authorities to serve their interests. He elaborates that the caste system became a uniform, all-encompassing, ideologically consistent, and Indological conceived system in India. The caste system had been taken as part of the colonial project of combining historical, textual, statistical, and ethnographical techniques aimed at legitimizing and facilitating colonial rule.⁸

Both Cohn and Dirks uncovered how the implicit and understudied colonial projects that produced practical knowledge in the form of travelogues, historiographies, geographical and ethnographical surveys, statistical returns, official proceedings, and legal codes naturalized the colonial rule. For Cohn and Dirks, these colonial projects were intentionally planned and designed by the colonizers to gain profits from trade surplus, land revenues, cheap natural resources, and monopolized markets.⁹ In other words, the dynamics of the expansion of the British Empire in India were for political and economic profits.¹⁰

⁷ Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁸ Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁹ The intentionally designed colonial projects elaborated by Cohn and Dirks can be regarded as a form of colonial governmentality, which indicates that the colonizers were fully aware of their enterprise in the colonies.

¹⁰ This implication has also appeared in other significant scholarly works, see Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Based on the studies of Cohn and Dirks, the colonial projects were imposed by the colonizers upon the colonized. Although the projects often gave rise to unintentional and sometimes contradictory consequences, the interactions between the colonizers and the colonized subjects were unilateral. For Ashis Nandy, colonialism is a state of mind that influences the colonized and colonizers alike. Nandy contends that colonial projects were carefully designed to subjugate the indigenous populations. This showed that the British intention was to make profits from the colony. However, this subjugation also resulted in anxieties and uncertainties in the minds of the colonizers. The root of the colonial fears and insecurities lies in the British reconstruction of Indian cultures and societies. In the heyday of the British rule in India, British intellectuals, Orientalists, and officials came to regard Indians and their culture as feminine, which was passive, irrational, and inferior to the masculine Britons. Although the constructed image of a feminine India made the British believe that they had the legitimacy to conquest, rule, and civilize the locals, it also brought concerns. Contemporary Britons believed that if the colonizers failed to discipline and enlighten the feminine Indians, their barbarous and irrational characteristics, which were part of their feminine identity, would inevitably cause damage to the British colonial enterprise.¹¹ In this sense, British colonialism in India, including military expansion, economic exploitation, and cultural projects, was motivated not only by profits but also by insecurity.

Focusing on the unsure and hesitant rhetoric in the official documents and archives of the Dutch East Indies, Ann Laura Stoler examines the root causes of colonial concerns of insecurity. She argues that colonial states, just like individuals, have their ontologies, which closely relate to the essential meaning of their existence. To pursue the ontology, the colonial state needs to convince itself that the subjects under its rule are comprehensible and predictable. In other words, to make the existence of the colonial state meaningful, the properties of all colonized subjects had to be stable, fixed, and knowable. In reality, however, the colonial power finds itself in a continually changing world, in which the properties of

¹¹ Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009). Also see Betty Joseph, *Reading the East India Company, 1720–1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

the colonized subjects are either ambiguous or uncertain. To hold its ontologies and maintain its colonial rule, the colonial state has to pretend that everything is within its reach. The pretension works through the production of archives, which gives the colonizers an illusion of certainty. Through deconstructing the mentalities and contexts of the producers of the archives, Stoler finds that even the colonial archives, which should be the symbol of the colonial state's capability of imposing well planned and carefully designed civilizing projects upon the colonized societies, are full of anxieties and uncertainties.¹²

Departing from Nandy and Stoler, a growing scholarship has developed in recent years to investigate how colonial policies were influenced or shaped by anxieties and fear instead of greed and ambitions.¹³ Colonial ambitions were entangled with colonial anxieties more often than not. The colonizers knew that their dominance in colonial societies was built upon the great performance of rhetorical and ritual symbols. The actual political and military capability of the colonizers, however, was far from enough to rule the vast territories of colonies such as India, Indonesia, and Indochina. The enormous gap between the limited capability of the colonizers and their ambitions to exploit foreign lands gave rise to the persistence of insecurity throughout the colonial period. It also pushed the colonial state to take action against real and imagined threats.

¹² Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). For further discussions over the epistemic anxieties of the colonial state, see Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archives: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ranajit Guha, 'Not at Home in Empire', *Critical Inquiry* 23:3 (1997): 482–493; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹³ Ranajit Guha argues that 'anxiety' is a more accurate term to describe the mentality of the colonizers facing uncertainties in colonies. This book, however, contends that anxieties and fear were often entangled in the minds of colonizers, see Ranajit Guha, 'Not at Home in Empire', 485. For scholarships that specifically discuss colonial anxieties, see Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Yumna Siddiqi, *Anxieties of Empire and the Fiction of Intrigue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Deep Kanta Lahiri-Choudhury, *Telegraphic Imperialism: Crisis and Panic in the Indian Empire, 1830–1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Kim Wagner, "'Treading upon Fires": The "Mutiny"-Motif and Colonial Anxieties in British India', *Past & Present* 218:1 (2013): 159–197; Harald Fischer-Tine ed., *Anxieties, Fear and Panic in Colonial Settings: Empire on the Verge of A Nervous Breakdown* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Robert Peckham ed., *Empires of Panic: Epidemic and Colonial Anxieties* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015).

Additionally, Orientalist projects tended to depict the indigenous people as backward, superstitious, primitive, and violent, who lacked the self-control to legitimize the civilizing mission. Nevertheless, as the constructed image of the ignorant and savage native population was embedded into the minds of the colonizers, they felt that they were trapped in a dangerous world. The colonial state was, therefore, anxious to identify and address potential threats to secure its positions.

In their investigations of the British empire-building process in India, C. A. Bayly and James Hevia find that the anxieties of the colonial authorities resulted from their lack of confidence in making sense of the foreign land they were about to rule. To address the concerns, the British built a vast communication and information-gathering network to convince themselves that they were capable of making the world surrounding them knowable and under their control. Ironically, the more information the colonial state gathered from local societies, the more worried it became.¹⁴ This sort of colonial anxieties not only influenced the domestic rule of the British Raj but also reflected in its foreign policies.

The Great Game Mentalities

From the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, the British East India Company established itself as the dominant power in South Asia.¹⁵ After Punjab was annexed following the Anglo-Sikh Wars in the 1840s, the British found that their conquest of northwest India was vulnerable to the threat from the north.¹⁶ The Russians had been building their influence in Central Asia for decades beginning in the early nineteenth century.¹⁷ In the eyes of British policymakers, the

¹⁴ C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁵ By using the term 'Great Game Mentalities', the author tries to put the story of the British concerns over the Chinese sojourners during the Second World War in the broader context of the British colonialism in South Asia over history.

¹⁶ Edward Ingram, *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia, 1828–1834* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

¹⁷ For the Russian expansion in Central Asia, see Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bokhara and Khiva, 1865–1924* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Edward Allworth, *Central Asia, 130 Years of Russian Dominance: A Historical Overview*

Russian establishment in Central Asia would be a base for further expansion into India if no intervention was taken. Against this backdrop, the British authorities mobilized a large amount of resources to strengthen its north-western frontiers.

In western Punjab, the Government of India initiated a large-scale project of constructing canals across the region and providing subsidies and even free land to peasants who were willing to settle down in the area. By transforming western Punjab into a prosperous and populated agricultural land, the British authorities harboured a long-term plan of building a stable, cultivated, and civilized north-western frontier that would be under its direct rule. In other words, the Canal Colonies in western Punjab were one of the cornerstones of the defence of the British Raj.¹⁸

In the west of Punjab, the Government of India set up a buffer zone composed of the North-West Frontier Province, several princely states, and the tribal areas. Although the British authorities allowed this region to be primarily ruled by local allies, it kept a significant military presence there to quell tribal rebellions as well as to guard against the Russians in Central Asia.¹⁹

Beyond the territories of the British Raj, Afghanistan was also under British influence via diplomatic and sometimes military means. Although the British did not base any troops in Afghanistan, they controlled the country's foreign affairs to prevent Russian infiltration.²⁰

(Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Elena Andreeva, *Russia and Iran in the Great Game: Travelogues and Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁸ Tan Tai Yong argues that the economic development in Punjab was correspondent with the militarization of the region, which dramatically transformed the local society, see Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State: The Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849–1947* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2005). For the position of Punjab in defense of the Raj, also see Ian Talbot, 'British Rule in the Punjab, 1849–1947: Characteristics and Consequences', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 19:2 (1991): 203–221.

¹⁹ For the British strategic concerns and the formation of the North-West Frontier in India, see Charles Miller, *Khyber, British India's North West Frontier: The Story of an Imperial Migraine* (London: Macmillan, 1977); Charles Allen, *Soldier Sahibs: The Men Who Made the North-West Frontier* (London: John Murray, 2000); Robert Johnson, 'Russians at the Gates of India? Planning the Defense of India, 1885–1900', *Journal of Military History* 67:3 (2003): 697–743; Andrew Roe, *Waging War in Waziristan: The British Struggle in the Land of Bin Laden, 1849–1947* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009); Christian Tripodi, *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and Tribal Administration on the North-West Frontier 1877–1947* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).

²⁰ Robert Huttenback, 'The "Great Game" in the Pamirs and the Hindu-Kush: The British Conquest of Hunza and Nagar', *Modern Asian Studies* 9:1 (1975): 1–29; Malcolm Yapp, *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran, and Afghanistan, 1798–1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); D. S.

The economic, political, and military arrangement of the British Raj in its north-western frontiers has long been regarded by historians as an effort by the British to contain the Russians in the Great Game. A large body of scholarship has been produced by far to analyse the causes, effects, and development of the Great Game from economic, political, and military perspectives. Most of these studies, however, tend to see the Great Game from the perspective of elite British policymakers in London, Calcutta, or Shimla. Following this trend, our understanding of the Great Game is that it was no more than a set of diplomatic negotiations, military planning, adventures, and espionage activities.²¹

The recent development of the scholarship shows that there are multiple ways and angles to make sense of the Great Game. Evgeny Sergeev argues that the complex narrative of the Great Game needs to be broken down into four interrelated dimensions. First, the Great Game was a competition for natural resources and markets in preindustrial Asia. Second, the Great Game represents a competition between two distinct modes of early globalization, both of which tried to integrate non-Western societies into their domains. Third, the Great Game was composed of multi-level decision-making and decision-implementing activities instead of a top-down policymaking process. Fourth, any analysis of the causes of the Great Game needs to consider the broader context of the Russo-British relations across Eurasia.²²

In introducing the Russian perspective and the experiences of multilevel participants, Sergeev enriches our understanding of the Great Game. Nevertheless, the analysis of the origins and developments of the Great Game has been confined to the realm of diplomatic and military history. Few studies have ever tried to explore how colonial mindset and logic, instead of geopolitical concerns, shaped the nature and dynamics of the Great Game.

Richards, *The Savage Frontier: A History of the Anglo-Afghan Wars* (London: Macmillan, 2002); Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002); Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *The Small Players of the Great Game: The Settlement of Iran's Eastern Borderlands and the Creation of Afghanistan* (London: Routledge, 2007).

²¹ It seems that the bottom-up depiction of the Great Game can only be found in Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim*, which presents stories of how various ordinary figures took part in the episode.

²² Evgeny Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856–1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

It is widely believed that the Great Game was about British concerns over Russian expansion in central Asia in the nineteenth century. Whether the Russian conspiracy against the British Raj was real or imagined, British anxieties were discernible in the development of the 'Scientific Frontier' of the Raj.²³ That mentality of anxieties over a certain external threat among British colonial officials was by no means exceptional to the case of the Great Game. In the eighteenth century, one of the main motivations for British expansion in South Asia was its concern over the French threat. Whether it was the Battle of Plassey, the Anglo-Maratha wars, or the Anglo-Mysore wars, one of the main reasons for British expansions in India was England's concern over a possible French takeover of British interests in the subcontinent. In this sense, the 'great game' with the French in the eighteenth century gave rise to the formation of the British Raj.²⁴ While in the early twentieth century, the focus of the 'great game' turned to the fight against Indian revolutionaries across the world. To prevent Indian revolutionaries from allying with British rivals such as Germany, the Comintern, and Japan, the colonial authorities built up a transnational surveillance network in the 1920s and 1930s.²⁵

²³ The 'scientific frontier' refers to the British policy of employing 'scientific' and 'rationale' methods to draw clear boundaries in the northwest frontiers of India in the nineteenth century. For discussion of the development of the perception of the 'scientific frontier', see Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

²⁴ One of the most updated scholarly works on the Anglo-French rivalry in India is Kenneth Margerison, 'French Visions of Empire: Contesting British Power in India after the Seven Years War', *English Historical Review* 130:544 (2015): 583–612. Also see R. A. Huttenback, 'The French Threat to India and British Relations with Sind, 1799–1809', *English Historical Review* 76:October (1961): 590–599; Sudipta Das, 'British Reactions to the French Bugbear in India, 1763–83', *European History Quarterly* 22:1 (1992): 39–65; Sudipta Das, *Myth and Realities of French Imperialism in India, 1763–1783* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993); Roy Kaushik, 'Military Synthesis in South Asia: Armies, Warfare and Indian Society, 1740–1849', *Journal of Military History* 69:3 (2005): 651–690; P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America, 1750–1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Most of these works highlight the geopolitical concerns of the British and French authorities in engaging war with one another in India. Few have ever tried to explore how colonial anxieties shaped colonial policies.

²⁵ To check the Indian revolutionary movements overseas, the British authorities set up a transnational surveillance network across the world, see Richard Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence: British Intelligence and the Defence of the Indian Empire, 1904–1924* (London: Frank Cass, 1995); Yin Cao, 'Kill Buddha Singh: Indian Nationalist Movement in Shanghai, 1914–27', *Indian Historical Review* 43:2 (2016): 270–288. For Indian revolutionaries' connections with the Japanese and Germans, see Milan Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981); Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Tim Harper, 'Singapore, 1915, and the Birth of the Asian Underground', *Modern Asian Studies* 47:6 (2013): 1782–1811.

Suppose the Great Game is analysed in the broader context of British colonialism in South Asia. In that case, we find that the anxieties of the British resolved around being attacked by certain external enemies. The result would be the loss of all their possessions. This belief was deeply embedded in the minds of colonial officials before and after the Anglo-Russian rivalries. In this sense, the colonial anxieties were not only about the colonizers' concern about possible uprisings of the colonized but also the worry of foreign interference, which would deprive the British of their monopoly in the colonies. The colonial authorities were too ready to predict, investigate, and identify external threats, whether they were real or imagined, in a bid to get rid of these anxieties. Accordingly, they set up laws, policies, and institutions to check and contain the potential crisis. This book examines the concerns of the British authorities over possible foreign intervention in India and their restless anxieties in designing strategies to neutralize the potential threat of the Great Game mentalities. The Great Game mentalities were the primary sources of the dynamics that motivated and shaped British colonial policies in South Asia from the eighteenth century to the end of the Raj in the 1940s.

The Chinese Migration in Modern India

Compared with the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, the Chinese migration in modern India draws much less scholarly attention due to its relatively small size.²⁶ It is now generally agreed that the Chinese began their migration into India as early as the late eighteenth century when the trade of the British East India Company in Canton was at its height.²⁷

²⁶ Modern India here means the Indian subcontinent under British rule since the late eighteenth century. The geographical extent of modern India in this book covers present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. This study also understands that large numbers of Tibetans and Chinese Muslims also migrated to India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Chinese migration in this book, however, refers to those who migrated from southern, central, and northern China.

²⁷ The Chinese Indians widely believe that their migration to modern South Asia started with Yang Dazhao (nicknamed Atchew), a Chinese tea trader who was welcomed by the Governor-General of British India Warren Hastings and established a sugar mill in Calcutta in the late eighteenth century. For the legends of Yang Dazhao, see Zhang Xing, 'The Chinese Community in Calcutta: Preservation and Change', Ph.D. dissertation, Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg, Germany; Zhang Xing and Tansen Sen, 'The Chinese in South Asia', in Tan Chee-Beng ed., *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2013), 206. The term 'Chinese Indians' indicates the Chinese settlers who were born in India and regarded themselves

These early migrants stayed in the neighbourhoods of Calcutta and engaged in local businesses of sugar mills, shoemaking, and carpentry.²⁸ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, wars and famines in China pushed hundreds of thousands of Chinese abroad for livelihood. India, however, was by no means an attractive destination for Chinese migrants, mainly because the job opportunities there were fewer than in Southeast Asia, Australia, and the United States (India itself was the main source for exporting labourers across the world at the time).²⁹ In the early 1900s, there were around 1,500 Chinese residents in Calcutta, most of whom engaged in small businesses. Chinese settlements in Bombay and Assam were also small, with just several hundred people each.³⁰ It was not until the 1940s that large numbers of Chinese flocked to India due to the chaotic situation in China and Southeast Asia caused by the Second World War. The registered Chinese civilian population in India in 1944 amounted to approximately 25,000, plus another 50,000 Chinese military personnel serving in the Chinese Expeditionary Force and various training institutions across the country.³¹ Unlike earlier migrations, these Chinese were refugees, soldiers, professionals, merchants, and sailors.³²

as Indian citizens while preserving Chinese identity (ancestry, Chinese language, and cultural practices and beliefs) at the same time. For the definition of Chinese Indian, see Zhang Xing, *The Chinese Community in Calcutta: Preservation and Change*, 50. The Chinese Indians should be distinguished from Chinese sojourners in this book.

²⁸ Jennifer Liang, a Chinese Indian herself, conducted detailed interviews to reconstruct the early history of the Chinese in India, see Jennifer Liang, 'Migration Patterns and Occupational Specializations of Kolkata Chinese: An Insider's History', *China Report* 43:4 (2007): 397–401.

²⁹ Wang Gungwu, *China and the Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991); Adam McKeown, 'Conceptualizing Chinese Diaspora, 1842–1949', *Journal of Asian Studies* 58:2 (1999): 306–337; Philip Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009); Adam McKeown, 'Chinese Emigration in Global Context, 1850–1940', *Journal of Global History* 5:1 (2010): 95–124.

³⁰ Zhang Xing and Tansen Sen, 'The Chinese in South Asia', 207.

³¹ NAI, Home Political, E_1945_NA_F-16-49, from Mr. Lovatt to J. R. de Chazal, 23 March 1945. This figure, however, does not include the number of Chinese who fled from Malaya to India.

³² Some Chinese officials (Ye Mingchen, Huang Maocai, and Ma Jianzhong) and intellectuals (Kang Youwei, Dai Jitao, Xu Dishan, and Xu Fancheng) did visit India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They wrote extensively on the history, art, literature, and politics of India. Nevertheless, the influence of these individual visitors on India's Chinese communities was limited, if not unknown. For the modern India-China connections, see Tansen Sen, *India, China, and the World: A Connected History* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017); Tansen Sen and Brian Tsui eds., *Beyond Pan-Asianism: Connecting China and India, 1840s–1960s* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020).

The story of the Chinese sojourners in India in the 1940s has much-limited attention. Most studies tend to focus on the identities, occupations, and social activities of the Chinese settlers.³³ Scholars have observed that the identities of Chinese settlers in modern India were closely related to their trades. There were four groups of Chinese in modern India.³⁴ The Cantonese from the Guangdong province in southern China were mostly employed as carpenters in the shipbuilding industry in Calcutta, Chittagong, and Karachi. The Hakkas, also from southern China, worked in the shoemaking and tannery industry in the Tangra district of Calcutta. There were also Chinese from Shandong in northern China and Hubei in central China. The migrants from Shandong were mostly silk traders travelling between Calcutta, Assam, Bombay, and Madras, while those from Hubei engaged in the dentistry business.

Like their fellow citizens in Southeast Asia, these Chinese sojourners (Chinese Indians once they settled down in India) transplanted their social and cultural institutions to India soon after they arrived. Huiguan (native-place associations) was formed to pull together migrants from the same region and to address community issues. Temples were set

³³ *Yindu Huaqiao Zhi* (A gazette of the Chinese Indian) is by far one of the most comprehensive records of the development of the Chinese communities in modern South Asia, see The Committee of Editorial Board of the Gazette of Overseas Chinese, *Yindu Huaqiao Zhi* (A gazette of the Chinese Indian) (Taipei: The Committee of Editorial Board of the Gazette of Overseas Chinese, 1956). A special issue entitled 'Kolkata (India) and China' in *China Report* in 2007, edited by Tansen Sen, provides theoretical analyses and little-known perspectives on the issue of the Chinese in India, see Tansen Sen, 'Kolkata and China: Some Unexplored Links', *China Report* 43:4 (2007): 393–396; Jennifer Liang, 'Migration Patterns and Occupational Specializations of Kolkata Chinese: An Insider's History', 397–410; Ellen Oxfield, 'Still Guest People: The Reproduction of Hakka Identity in Kolkata, India', *China Report* 43:4 (2007): 411–435; Payal Banerjee, 'Chinese Indians in Fire: Refractions of Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality, and Citizenship in Post-Colonial India's Memories of the Sino-Indian War', *China Report* 43:4 (2007): 437–463. Also see Ellen Oxfield, *Blood, Sweat, and Mahjong: Family and Enterprise in an Overseas Community* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Kiyomi Yamashita, 'Yindude huarenshehui yu tangrenjie (The Chinese communities and Chinatowns in India: Focusing on Calcutta)', *Dongnanyayanjiu* 1 (2010): 54–63; J. Bonnerjee, 'Neighbourhood, City, Diaspora: Identity and Belonging for Calcutta's Anglo-Indian and Chinese Community', Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 2010; Alice Ping-Hsiu Lin, 'Chinese in Pakistan: Diasporic Identity, Faith and Practice', *Asian Anthropology* 16:2 (2017): 133–147; Dripta Nag, 'Introspection in Fieldwork: Ethnographic Research in Chinatown, Kolkata', *German Anthropology Online* 2:July (2018): 1–18.

³⁴ Jia Haitao finds that the majority of the Chinese living in Calcutta were Hakka Chinese, who accounted for nearly 80% of the Chinese population, see Jia Haitao, 'Yinduhuaaren de zhuangkuang jiyuzhongguo de lianxi' (The situation of the Chinese Indian and their connections with China), *Shijieminsu* 3 (2008): 56–61. For further discussions on how the Hakkas maintained their identities in Calcutta, see Ellen Oxfield, 'Still Guest People: The Reproduction of Hakka Identity in Kolkata, India', 411–435.

up to allow community members to pay tribute to their ancestors and homeland deities. Schools were established to teach Chinese languages and culture to children. Scholars believe that these social and cultural institutions were one of the key factors that strengthened Chinese identities among the migrants for generations.³⁵ The decline of the Chinese communities in India after the Sino-Indian War in 1962 has also drawn scholarly attention. Practitioners have investigated the experience of the Chinese migrants in internment camps in India during the war of 1962.³⁶ As the Chinese migrated to the West after the war, some scholars explored how the Indian cultural elements were maintained by the Chinese migrants in Canada, the United States, and Australia.³⁷

Overall, the general paradigms and perspectives of studies on the Chinese communities in India are not distinguishable from studies of the Chinese diaspora in other parts of the world. In other words, a study of Chinese migrants in Thailand or Brazil would also highlight topics such as the origins and development of the community, the identity transformation, cultural preservation, and the interaction with the indigenous population. What makes the story of the Chinese sojourners in India unique is the diaspora moment of the 1940s.³⁸

³⁵ Dai Zi'an ed., *Yindubandao huaqiaojiaoyu* (The Education of the Chinese Indians in Indian Peninsula) (Taipei: Haiwaichubanshe, 1958); Hasan Ali, 'The Chinese in Calcutta: A Study of a Racial Minority', in M. Siddiqui ed., *Aspects of Society and Culture in Calcutta* (Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India, 1982), 88–95; Zhang Xing, 'Wenhuaarentongde chuanchengyu chuangxing: Yindujaergeda huarende duoyuanhua zongjiaoxinyang yanjiu' (Inheritance and Innovations as Factors of Cultural Identity: A Study on the Diverse Religious Practices of the Chinese in Kolkata, India), *Huaqiaohuaren lishiyanjiu* 4 (2008): 49–58; Zhang Xing, 'Creating a New Cultural Identity: India-related Religious Practices among the Chinese Community in Kolkata', *China Report* 45:1 (2009): 53–63; Zhang Xing, *Preserving Cultural Identity through Education: The Schools of the Chinese Community in Calcutta, India* (Singapore: Nalanda Srivijaya Center, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010).

³⁶ Alan Cohen and Shao-chuan Leng, 'The Sino-Indian Dispute over the Internment and Detention of Chinese in India', in Alan Cohen ed., *China's Practice of International Law: Some Case Studies* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 268–320; Payal Banerjee, 'Chinese Indians in Fire: Refractions of Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality, and Citizenship in Post-Colonial India's Memories of the Sino-Indian War', 437–463; Zhang Xiuming, 'Beibianyuanhuadequanti: Yinduhuaqiao huarenshehui de bianqian' (A marginalized group: The transformation of the Chinese communities in India), *Huaqiaohuaren lishiyanjiu* 4 (2008): 6–23; Kwai-Yun Li, 'Deoli Camp: An Oral History of Chinese Indians from 1962 to 1966', Master Thesis, University of Toronto, 2011.

³⁷ Gouri Chatterjee, 'Goodbye, Chinatown', *Far Eastern Economic Review* 159:20 (1996): 28–29; Li Guiyun, 'Sanchongshenfeng: Yiweilaiziyindu de jianadahuaaren de gushi' (Triple Identities: Tale of a Chinese-Indian Canadian), *Huaqiaohuaren lishiyanjiu* 4 (2008): 65–66.

³⁸ Shelly Chan develops the concept of diaspora moment to elaborate how specific global, national, and local events such as the Taiping Rebellion, the California Gold Rush, and the lifting

As large numbers of Chinese refugees, soldiers, professionals, merchants, and sailors flocked to India during the Second World War, the scale and features of Chinese migration became different from that of earlier periods. However, the lack of scholarly interest in such a significant change may be attributed to the assumption that the Chinese who entered India during the Second World War were not migrants but merely sojourners. They were viewed as sojourners because they stayed in India only for a few years and had no intention of migrating.

Although Wang Gungwu has long argued that most Chinese migrants of the modern age were sojourners, the Chinese sojourners in wartime India are different in terms of their intentions and occupations.³⁹ Chinese soldiers, professionals, and sailors were not in India voluntarily but were either sent by the Chinese government or were trapped there because of the war. Many of these people later deserted their units. They ended up as gangsters and smugglers, either repatriated by the British authorities back to China or voluntarily leaving India for other countries by the end of the war.

Culturally speaking, these sojourners left nothing substantial compared to the century-long Chinese migration communities, who built schools, temples, and huiguans. Cultural studies highlight identity transformation, religious rituals, and social capital to be the dominant approach in research on Chinese overseas; understandably, most studies have not taken the story of the Chinese sojourners in wartime India seriously. The assumption is that these sojourners had an insignificant impact on the general trajectories of the migrant societies.

This book, however, argues that the inflow of tens of thousands of Chinese in the 1940s dramatically influenced the Chinese communities in India. The newcomers brought business opportunities as well as chaos. More importantly, these ambitious smugglers, jobless sailors, deserters,

of the Qing emigration ban in 1893 entangled with the modern Chinese migration. The patterns, features, and agents of the migration would go through dramatic change during these moments, see Shelly Chan, *Diaspora's Homeland: Modern China in the Age of Global Migration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

³⁹ In Wang Gungwu's analysis, the transition of the status of overseas Chinese from sojourners to migrants is mainly the result of the change of the colonial regimes into nation-states across the world in the twentieth century, see Wang Gungwu, *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

and skilful professionals caught the attention of the Chinese Nationalist government. The Chinese government tried to include all Chinese subjects, in China as well as abroad, in its nationalist agendas and state-building projects. The growing activities of the Chinese Nationalist government in India drove the British authorities to establish surveillance over the Chinese communities and control over further Chinese migrations. The British restrictive policies were later inherited by the independent Indian government, which reached its height during the war of 1962 when the Indian authorities decided to put all Chinese migrants living in India into internment camps.

Modern China's State-Building Projects

In his investigation into the making of the modern Chinese state, Huaiyin Li argues that the Chinese state's transformation from a traditional empire into a modern one happened in three stages and took around three centuries.⁴⁰ From the establishment of the Qing rule to the mid-nineteenth century, the territorial expansion of Qing China laid the foundation for contemporary China's territorial coverage and ethnic composition. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, China was integrated into the Western-dominated system of sovereign states after humiliating

⁴⁰ Patricia Thornton defines the state-building projects in modern China as concerted efforts to centralize the administrative bureaucracy and penetrating the local and personal levels of the society, see Patricia Thornton, *Disciplining the State: Virtue, Violence, and State-Making in Modern China* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 2. This book develops Thornton's definition by adding that state-building is not only a domestic issue but is also an international agenda. As Prasenjit Duara argues, modern China's state-building process was constantly entangled and intersected with the nation-building efforts, which demanded the legitimacy of the central government, see Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). This study finds that the legitimacy of the central government depended on to what extent it was able to promote China's international status and earn international recognition. In other words, efforts of the government to present China as a modern and powerful nation on the international stage should be an important part of the state-making projects. Hideo Fukamachi elaborates that the essential aim of the New Life Movement, one of the most important state-making projects carried out by the Nationalists, was not only to change the Chinese society but also to improve the image of the Chinese nation in the eyes of Westerners, see Hideo Fukamachi, *Jiaoyangshenti de zhengzhi: Zhongguo guomindang de xinshenghuoyundong* (The politics of disciplining the body: The New Life Movement of the Chinese Nationalist Party) (Beijing: Sanlianshudian, 2017), 22–24. In this sense, state-building is not only to strengthen the state domestically but also to earn the recognition and respect of others internationally.

defeats at the hands of Western powers and the Westernized Japanese. During the Republican period, numerous attempts were made to strengthen the capability of the central government by consolidating and centralizing resources and expanding the reach of the state to various sectors of the society.⁴¹

In the 1930s, the effort to build a unified and centralized state reached its height in Republican China as the Nationalists reunified much of the country and initiated their state-building projects. The focus of previous studies has been on the corruption, ineffective bureaucracy, incoherent policies, and faction of the Nationalist government, which led to its demise during the Chinese Civil War.⁴² However, recent scholarship shows that policy-makers of the Nationalist government initiated all-encompassing state-building projects that laid the foundation for the political, social, and economic structures of Communist China after 1949.⁴³

In addition to modernizing and centralizing government institutions to strengthen and expand the capability and reach of the state, one of the most striking characteristics of the state-building projects during the Nationalist period was to discipline and train its subjects. Assuming that the cultivation of the identity of the patriotic, civilized, and responsible citizenship was essential to the success of the modernization of the state as a whole, the Nationalists launched a set of mass mobilization movement (the New Life Movement as it is generally known) to instil discipline and good behaviour in the daily life of the population.⁴⁴ Personal

⁴¹ Huaiyin Li, *The Making of the Modern Chinese State 1600–1950* (London: Routledge, 2020).

⁴² Lloyd Eastman may be one of the most influential scholars who attribute the failure of the Nationalists to their own faults. Eastman also gave very negative comments about the Nationalist initiated state-building projects, which he summarizes as ambitious but unrealistic, see Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China under Nationalist Rule, 1927–1937* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); Lloyd Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937–1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984).

⁴³ Hans van de Ven contend that the Nationalists did a quite good job in modernizing the state and resisting the Japanese invasion considering the enormous challenges they faced in the 1930s and 1940s, see Hans van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China 1925–1945* (London: Routledge, 2003); Hans van de Ven, *China at War: Triumph and Tragedy in the Emergence of the New China, 1937–1952* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017). For studies that highlight the achievements of the Nationalist rule, also see Julia Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Politics: State-Building in Republican China, 1927–1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Elizabeth Remick, *Building Local States: China during the Republican and Post-Mao Eras* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ Before the 2000s, most scholars took the New Life Movement as a derivative form of Fascism that was designed by Chiang Kai-shek to strengthen his authoritarian rule, see Arif Dirlik, 'The Ideological Foundation of the New Life Movement: A Study in Counterrevolution', *Journal of Asian Studies* 34:4 (1975): 945–980; Stephen Averill, 'The New Life in Action: The Nationalist

activities and habits such as opium smoking, gambling, spitting, making noise in public places, and unsanitary lifestyles were all tagged as uncivilized and premodern. These habits and activities were to be corrected, and discipline was instilled through the intervention of the state power. The disciplined population also needed to be trained to be patriotic and helpful professionals who would contribute their skills and knowledge to state-building projects.

Current scholarship has paid exclusive attention to the state-building projects within the territories of China. In contrast, a few have tried to explore how the central government decided to extend its state-building projects to Chinese communities overseas.⁴⁵ In the nineteenth and

Government in South Jiangxi, 1934–37', *The China Quarterly* 88:December (1981): 594–628; William Wei, *Counterrevolution in China: The Nationalists in Jiangxi during the Soviet Period* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985); William Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984); Frederick Wakeman, Jr., 'A Revisionist View of the Nanjing Decade: Confucian Fascism', *The China Quarterly* 150:Special Issue: Reappraising Republic China (1997): 395–432. In recent decades, more and more scholars have argued that the New Life Movement is a part of modern China's state-building process, which aims to create modern citizenship and national identity, see Yen Hsiao-pen, 'Body Politics, Modernity and National Salvation: The Modern Girl and the New Life Movement', *Asian Studies Review* 29:2 (2005): 165–186; Robert Culp, 'Rethinking Governmentality: Training, Cultivation, and Cultural Citizenship in Nationalist China', *Journal of Asian Studies* 65:3 (2006): 529–548; Federica Ferlanti, 'The New Life Movement in Jiangxi Province, 1934–1938', *Modern Asian Studies* 44:5 (2010): 1–40. Some scholars contend that since the Nationalist government found its capability and resources had not been strong enough to fully penetrate the society and discipline the population, it had resorted to the traditional Chinese virtues and ethics to facilitate the New Life Movement, see Liu Wen-nan, 'Guixunrichangshenghuo: Xinshenghuoyundong yu xiandaiguojia zhili' (Disciplining Everyday Life: the New Life Movement and the Governance of the Modern State), *Journal of Nanjing University* (Philosophy, Humanities and Social Sciences) 5 (2013): 89–102; Hideo Fukamachi, *Jiaoyangshenti de zhengzhi: Zhongguo guomindang de xinshenghuoyundong* (The politics of disciplining the body: The New Life Movement of the Chinese Nationalist Party) (Beijing: Sanlianshudian, 2017).

⁴⁵ There exists a large body of scholarship that focuses on the politicization of overseas Chinese in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in which the Chinese central government played an insignificant role, see Li Yinghui, *Huaqiaozhengce yu haiwaiminzu zhuyi, 1912–1949* (Overseas Chinese Affairs and the nationalism overseas, 1912–1949) (Taipei: Academia Historica, 1997). It was not until the 1930s, when the Nationalists decided to put the overseas Chinese into their nationalist agendas, that the central government began to systematically set up institutions to take charge of the overseas Chinese affairs. Only a few practitioners, however, have tried to scrutinize how the techniques and strategies of state-building projects of the Nationalist government were employed in its mobilization and control of the overseas Chinese, see C. F. Yong and R. B. McKenna, *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya, 1912–1949* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990); Bao Aiqin, '1925–1945 nian Guominzhengfu qiaowuzhengce jigongzuo shulun' (A brief study of the Nationalist government's policies regarding the overseas Chinese), *Huaqiaohuaren lishiyanjiu* 2 (2000): 43–48; Zhang Saiqun, *Nanjing guominzhengfu qiaowuzhengce yanjiu* (A study of the policies regarding the overseas Chinese of the Nanjing Nationalist government) (Beijing: Zhongguo yanshichubanshe, 2008); Chen Guowei, '1924–1945nian guomindang haiwaibu yu qiaowugongzuo kaolun' (KMT's

twentieth centuries, hundreds of thousands of Chinese went abroad to seek a better livelihood or learn modern knowledge. The remittance and Western knowledge they brought back home were the main sources of China's modernization; they were also patrons, founders, and participants in modern China's reforms and revolutions.

When the Nationalists took power in the 1930s, they also tried to incorporate overseas Chinese into their nationalist agendas and state-building projects. The legitimacy of the Nationalist rule in China was in their promise to end all national humiliations endured at the hands of Westerners. They also promised to build a modern and prosperous country for its people. They planned on re-establishing China as a great power in the world. The hope was to turn overseas Chinese into loyal, responsible, and civilized subjects. By doing this, they would have patriotic professionals to help in state-building projects. It was also a crucial display of the Chinese Nationalist government's move to show foreigners that the Chinese could stand on equal grounds with Western powers. In lifting the international status and promoting the image of China, the Nationalist government would strengthen the legitimacy of its rule in China.

During the Second World War, Southeast Asia fell into the hands of the Japanese, and tens of thousands of Chinese soldiers, merchants, professionals, and refugees flocked to India. The Chinese Nationalist government tried to turn India into the backyard of its state-building projects by attempting to control and train its Chinese subjects living there.⁴⁶ This move, however, heightened the anxieties of the British authorities, which assumed the Nationalist government's state-building projects in India

Department of Overseas Party Affairs and its role in the overseas Chinese affairs, 1924–1945), *Huaqiaohuaren lishiyanjiu* 3 (2008): 60–69; Philip Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*; Zhang Xuejun, 'Minguozhengfu yuhaiwaihuaqiaoshehuide zhiduhualianxi' (The institutional connections between the Nationalist government and overseas Chinese), *Lilunjie* 459:12 (2011): 66–68.

⁴⁶ Tan Yunshan, one of the most renowned Chinese scholars working in India in the twentieth century, expressed his frustrations over the 'miserable', 'uncivilized', and 'chaotic' condition of the Chinese community in Calcutta as early as 1930. He pointed out that the (Bowbazar) Chinatown tainted the fame of the Chinese civilization and that the Chinese authorities should pay attention to the Chinese living in India. The behavior and activities of these Chinese should be corrected and disciplined, see Tan Yunshan, 'Yindu jia'ergeda zhi Huaqiao' (Overseas Chinese in Calcutta), *Dongfang zazhi* 11 (1930): 23–30. Tan Yunshan's appeal, however, had not drawn any serious attention from the Chinese government by then, largely owing to the lack of funding.

were a well-designed conspiracy against British colonial rule.⁴⁷ The colonial anxieties led to surveillance, restriction, and prosecution of Chinese people living in India.⁴⁸

This book investigates how a specific group of Chinese sojourners in India was trapped by the Chinese authorities' nationalist agendas and the British colonial anxieties. Furthermore, the author of this book also argues that the Chinese sojourners were by no means passive subjects who were powerless in the face of the interventions of the Chinese and British authorities. Instead, they were active players in the game. Their personal choices and actions in India motivated the Chinese authorities to organize and discipline them. The activities of the sojourners also led to the British authorities taking counteractions against the Chinese government's interventions. The sojourners manipulated, sometimes

⁴⁷ It is admitted that the Nationalist government did send spies and intelligence agents to India to collect information before, during, and even after the Second World War. Nevertheless, the objectives of the intelligence work were basically about reporting and evaluating the political situation in India so as to help the Chinese authorities optimize their foreign policy. All governments conduct intelligence activities, and such work alone would not be regarded as a conspiracy. In fact, the Chinese Nationalists' work of disciplining the Chinese population in India concerned the British authorities.

⁴⁸ The British colonial anxieties over the politicization of the overseas Chinese originated from the May Fourth Movement in 1919. Since then, the British authorities had been worried that the anti-imperial movement would spread among the Chinese migrants in Malaya and the Straits Settlements and provoke uprisings against British colonial rule. The nature of the Kuomintang (the ruling party of the Nationalist China) as a revolutionary party and the attempt of the Nationalist government to cultivate national identity among the overseas Chinese in the 1930s further concerned the British authorities, see C. F. Yong and R. B. McKenna, *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya, 1912–1949*; Yen Ching-hwang, *Community and Politics: The Chinese in Colonial Singapore and Malaysia* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1995); Koon Huat Kin, 'Dilemma of Identity: The Overseas Chinese in Malaya and the Quest for Nationhood 1930–1949', PhD Dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Sciences, 2006; Zhang Jian, *Dongnanya huaqiao minzuzhuyi fazhan yanjiu 1912–1928* (A study of the development of the nationalism among the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, 1912–1928) (Guilin: Guangxishifandaxue chubanshe, 2008); Kuo Hwei-Ying, *Networks beyond Empires: Chinese Business and Nationalism in the Hong Kong-Singapore Corridor, 1914–1941* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Azlan Tajuddin, 'Diasporic Insecurity as Constructional Framework for Chinese Political Identity in Colonial Malaya (1826–1957)', *Journal of International and Global Studies* 10:1 (2018): 24–39; Han Ming Guang, 'Chinese Reading Room, Print Culture, and Overseas Chinese Nationalism in Colonial Singapore and Malaya', *Library & Information History* 35:4 (2019): 214–228. In this sense, the British colonial anxieties over the Chinese sojourners in India in the 1940s were an extension of their earlier concerns. Yet, as large parts of Asia were occupied by the Japanese during the Second World War, the Indian colony became unprecedentedly important to the British in the 1940s. In this context, the Chinese sojourners in wartime India, most of whom were soldiers, sailors, and professionals rather than ordinary labourers, made the British colonial officials uncomfortable. Chiang Kai-shek's vocal support for the Indian nationalist movement and his meeting with Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru further deepened the colonial anxieties. It pushed the British authorities to worry about an imminent Chinese threat to Britain's most valuable colony.

successfully, the loopholes and conflicts between the Chinese and British authorities to further their plans and agendas. Overall, this book is about how individuals exploited, negotiated with, and confronted the authorities in the encounters between non-Western nationalist agendas and Western colonial mentalities.

Structure

The book is divided into four chapters. The first chapter explores how Chinese seamen in Calcutta negotiated with and responded to the Chinese authorities' intention of bringing them into the grand nationalist agenda. At the beginning of the Second World War, more than 3,000 Chinese seamen were stranded in Calcutta. The Chinese Nationalist government and the Government of India worked out a plan to control these seamen and turn them into a useful wartime labour force by establishing the Chinese Seamen's Wartime Service Corps (the Corps hereafter). Meanwhile, the Chinese seamen employed various strategies to use the regulatory regimes for their purposes. Some of the sailors chose to flee from Calcutta to Bombay, wherein the control of the authorities was not that tight. A majority of the sailors decided not to join the Corps but to confront the Nationalist government by organizing themselves into self-run political societies. Having failed to force the Nationalist government to make a compromise on their requests, the seamen rioted in Calcutta in late 1942. They claimed that they were breaking up with the Nationalist government. The riots were quelled by the joint actions of the Chinese and British authorities. The seamen were imprisoned or were forced to join the Corps. Within a year, most of the imprisoned seamen fled to Calcutta. Those who were forced to join the Corps deserted. The failure of the Corps sheds light on the ambitious intention of the state-building projects and the limit of its reach and gives us fresh insight into ordinary people's art of (not) being governed in the face of nationalist and colonial regimes.

In addition to the Chinese seamen crisis, the India-China smuggling ring during the war was a threat to the Chinese authorities. The smuggling affected state-building projects and China's international reputation, and therefore the authorities had to find means to address

the problem. Chapter 2 looks at the experiences of three ordinary Chinese: Chen Mengzhao, who hired American pilots for his smuggling business; Gao Wenjie, who disguised himself as a Chinese army officer to evade the customs for his smuggling activities; and Wang Lian, who was sent to India by a local Chinese government unit to conduct smuggling. The three men stayed in the same house in Calcutta until they were arrested by the local police in early 1943 and deported to China. In telling this story, the chapter demonstrates how the Nationalist government's effort to obtain Chinese army officers' privileges in India facilitated smuggling. The rampant wartime India-China smuggling was in conflict with the Nationalist government's ambition of presenting itself as a great power. The British authorities further saw China's policy of preventing smuggling activities in India as a Chinese conspiracy against India's sovereignty. The miscommunication between the Chinese nationalist concerns and British colonial anxieties led to the surveillance, restrictions, and prosecutions of Chinese migrants in India until the end of the war.

The arrival of the Chinese soldiers, most of whom came to India after receiving American training, widened the misunderstanding between the Chinese and British authorities. In the third chapter, the desertion of a Chinese soldier, Chen Ching Lin, from the Chinese Expeditionary Force in Ramgarh, his journey across India, and his mysterious return to China shed light on how the Nationalist government's aim to discipline the overseas Chinese communities conflicted with the agenda of the British geopolitics. During the Second World War, the Chinese Nationalist government worked hard to promote its image as a modern, civilized, and responsible power. Nevertheless, Chinese gambling houses, gang violence, and rampant desertion among Chinese soldiers in India embarrassed the Nationalist government and thwarted its effort. Determined to save the face of the Chinese nation, the Nationalist government asked its consulates in India to discipline all Chinese subjects aggressively. The British authorities, however, saw the Chinese desertions, gambling business, gang activities, as well as the Chinese government's interventions, as a designed conspiracy to encroach on Indian sovereignty. The desertion of Chen Ching Lin was, therefore, closely watched and investigated by both the Chinese and British authorities. For the Chinese government, the massive desertion of their

soldiers in India was shameful and harmful to their pursuit of international status. For the British, the Chinese deserters were seen as intelligent agents and spies sent by the Chinese government to collect information in India and trouble the British colonial rule. Chen Ching Lin, in his turn, made use of the loopholes in the policies to evade the checks of both regimes. Although the British authorities claimed that they arrested Chen Ching Lin in Calcutta and deported him to China, this chapter shows that the real Chen Ching Lin might have escaped into Burma. The man who the British repatriated was an imposter. Overall, this chapter provides a subaltern perspective to demonstrate how ordinary people manipulated the loopholes left by the Chinese and British authorities to pursue their personal interests.

The fourth chapter centres on the evacuation of the Lahore Elementary Flying Training School (LEFTS), which was built in 1943 to train Chinese pilots and mechanics. It details the tensions between the British and Chinese authorities over the existence of the school. For the Nationalist government, the trained Chinese pilots and the aircraft used for training were significant assets for its state-building projects. The British authorities saw the flying training school to empower the Chinese airforce, which the Chinese could use to intervene in Indian affairs in the post-war period. As the Second World War came to an end, the Nationalists urgently needed pilots and aircraft to help them in the civil war against the Chinese Communists. The British authorities, overwhelmed by the chaotic situation during the final days of the Raj, wanted to be rid of the burden of the LEFTS. Nevertheless, whereas both the Chinese and British tried to immediately move the school out of India, the Chinese pilots and aircraft were trapped in India until mid-1946 due to the transportation disruptions caused by the Royal Indian Navy mutiny. This chapter puts the story of the little-known LEFTS into the broad context of the British withdrawal from India and the Chinese Civil War. It uses this case to uncover the links between the two most significant events in the history of modern India and China. In so doing, it looks at how modern Indian and Chinese histories were entangled and could be written in a shared framework.

In the concluding chapter, the book investigates the colonial concerns inherited by the independent Indian government about Chinese migrants in India. The Indian government kept restricting, checking, and watching

the activities of the Chinese Indians well into the 1960s. The Sino-Indian War finally sealed the fate of the Chinese communities in India. The book further argues that the ongoing brawl between China and the West might be the continuity of the century-long misunderstanding and miscalculation in the conflict between China's nationalist agendas and Western powers' (neo) colonial anxieties.

2

Sailors

On the morning of 24 October 1942, more than 300 Chinese seamen flocked into Calcutta's Bowbazar Chinatown¹ and shouted slogans that aimed to humiliate the Chinese Nationalist government. All of a sudden, they began to loot shops and beat pro-government community leaders. When they saw the portraits of Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Republic of China, on the walls of some pro-government shops, the seamen took them down and tore them into pieces. In doing so, the seamen declared that they were cutting ties with the Chinese Nationalist government owing to their suffering and betrayal at the hands of the regime.² Why did the Chinese seamen stay in Calcutta? What made them so violently angry with their own government? And how did the Chinese Nationalist government and the Government of India respond to the crisis? In answering these questions, this chapter tells a story of how the Chinese and British authorities worked together to attempt to control, watch, and discipline the Chinese sailors in Calcutta during the Second World War and how these sailors negotiated, fled, and confronted the interventions of the authorities.

¹ There were two Chinatowns in Calcutta in the 1940s. Zhang Xing finds that the Bowbazar Chinatown was established in the city's Bowbazar area, located between Colootala Street and Bowbazar Street (Bepin Behary Ganguly Street as it is known now), in the late eighteenth century. Chinese residents in Bowbazar were diverse, including Cantonese, Hakka, and those from Hubei, Shandong, and other parts of China. The Tangra Chinatown was established in the early twentieth century by Hakka Chinese engaged in the tannery business. For the development and main characteristics of the two Chinatowns in Calcutta, see Xing, *The Chinese Community in Calcutta*, 59–102. Because the Bowbazar Chinatown locates in the city centre while the Tangra Chinatown sits in the eastern suburb, the Bowbazar Chinatown has been the site where the Chinese visitors (including sailors, merchants, and government officials) preferred to stay. The Bowbazar Chinatown is the main arena where most events unfold in this chapter.

² KMTA, Te 13/16.1, from Pao Chun-chien to Wu Tieh-cheng, 25 October 1942.

The Changing Patterns of the State-Building Process in Modern China

Since the late Qing period, the Chinese state had made numerous attempts to centralize its power with the assumption that only a strong authority at the centre could mobilize and concentrate resources around the country to end China's humiliation at the hands of Westerners (and later the Japanese) and transform China into a modern nation-state. With this aim in mind, the Chinese Nationalist government initiated state-building projects to try to reform the administration's structure, develop the economy, and strengthen the military.³ The core of all these projects was to mobilize the population and discipline them into modern and responsible citizens.⁴

The outbreak of the War of Resistance posed both challenges and opportunities to the Nationalist government's state-building projects. On the one hand, the Japanese invasion disrupted the development and even threatened the Nationalist rule; on the other hand, the Nationalist state had adequate legitimacy to infiltrate into local societies to mobilize and utilize all available resources in the name of national salvation.⁵

³ State-building projects in this study mainly refer to infrastructural, administrative, and institutional projects initiated by the central government to expand the power of the state. For discussions on the state-building projects initiated by the Nationalist government, see Arthur Young, *China's Nation-Building Effort, 1927–1937: The Financial and Economic Record* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971); Robert Bedeski, *State-Building in Modern China: The Kuomintang in the Prewar Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Thomas Rawski, *Economic Growth in Prewar China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); William Kirby, 'China Unincorporated: Company Law and Business Enterprise in Twentieth-Century China', *Journal of Asian Studies* 54:1 (1995): 43–63; Julia Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Politics: State Building in Republican China 1927–1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); William Kirby, 'Engineering China: Birth of the Developmental State, 1928–1937', in Wen-hsin Yeh ed., *Becoming Chinese: Passage to Modernity and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 137–160; Margherita Zanasi, *Saving the Nation: Economic Modernity in Republican China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁴ For the mass mobilization in modern China, see Henrietta Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen: Political Ceremonies and Symbols in China, 1911–1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Philip Kuhn, *Origins of the Modern Chinese State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Hsiao-pei Yen, 'Body Politics, Modernity, and National Salvation: The Modern Girl and the New Life Movement', *Asian Studies Review* 29:2 (2005): 165–186; Robert Culp, 'Rethinking Governmentality: Training, Cultivation, and Cultural Citizenship in Nationalist China', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 65:3 (2006): 529–548; Rana Mitter, 'Classifying Citizens in Nationalist China during World War II, 1937–1941', *Modern Asian Studies* 45:2 (2011): 243–275.

⁵ Lin Hsiao-Ting, 'War, Leadership and Ethnopolitics: Chiang Kai-shek and China's Frontiers, 1941–1945', *Journal of Contemporary China* 18:59 (2009): 201–217.

One of the most important resources the local societies could provide to the state's war effort is workforce. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Chinese men were conscripted from their villages and communities to serve as soldiers during the war. The Nationalist state, with its aspiration of establishing modern citizenship, however, was not satisfied with the traditional model of conscription, which relied on either community bonds or mercenary practices.⁶ Instead, it designed a conscription system that was under the direction of the central government. With this centralized recruitment mechanism, the Nationalists intended to draw the workforce not through local gentries or market forces but by resorting to the draftees' acceptance of their identity as modern citizens who would identify with the state and commit themselves to the nationalistic agendas.⁷ Soldiers conscripted in this way were, therefore, citizen-soldiers who were not only the products of the state-building process but also participants themselves.⁸

In reality, however, few draftees accepted the Nationalist government's interpretation of their new identities as citizen-soldiers. Most ordinary Chinese at that time had no faith in the state and thus had no interest in taking up the obligations the state conferred to them. As a result, villages and urban institutions shielded their labour forces from the conscription administration. To meet the demand of the central government, conscription officials had to commercialize the recruitment process by outsourcing agents to purchase draftees. The failure of embedding the idea of citizen-soldier into the minds and hearts of ordinary Chinese led to the dysfunction of the Nationalist government's conscription system throughout the war. The deep cause of the failure resulted from the fact that most ordinary Chinese at the time did not expect any protection and relief from the central government and had no identification with the state from the very beginning. The corrupted, violent, and commercialized conscription system further alienated the population.

⁶ Diana Lary and S. R. MacKinnon, *Scars of War: The Impact of Warfare on Modern China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001).

⁷ Merle Goldman and Elizabeth Perry, *Changing Meanings of Citizenship in Modern China* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁸ For discussions on the identities of citizen-soldiers in modern China, see Joshua Howard, *Workers at War: Labor in China's Arsenal, 1937-1953* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Elizabeth Perry, *Patrolling the Revolution: Worker Militias, Citizenship, and the Modern Chinese State* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

For the Chinese sailors trapped in port cities across the world during the Second World War, however, the identification with the state was not a problem. Having been exploited and discriminated against by the foreign shipping companies, the Chinese sailors expected the Chinese Nationalist government to protect their interests. The Nationalist government, in its turn, enthusiastically responded to the appeal of the sailors by launching negotiations with foreign governments and setting up institutions of support. Yet, ironically, this book shows that the Nationalist state's initiative of protecting these sailors by involving them in state-building projects failed anyway, even when the sailors had the identification with and expectations of the state.

In this chapter, I argue that the reason for such a strange failure lies in the different understandings regarding conscription. For sailors, their perception of being conscripted was directly informed by the conscription work back in China, wherein people were forced to join or even sold to the army to fight the Japanese without reasonable payment, adequate food and clothing, and professional training. For the Nationalist authorities, however, the conscription of the Chinese sailors overseas was nothing more than a public relations campaign. By conscripting, disciplining, and training the sailors who foreign governments usually regarded as troublemakers, the Nationalist government intended to promote its own image as a modern, responsible, and civilized power. As a result, while the state attempted to use the conscription as a display of its image, the sailors saw the conscription as a threat to their well-being and took action against the state's interventions.

In telling the story of how the Nationalist government conscripted the Chinese sailors in Calcutta during the Second World War and how these sailors responded to the state interventions, this chapter scrutinizes the changing strategies of the state-building process during the Nationalist rule. By far, most scholarships on the state-building process in modern China have been focusing on the debate of the effects of the Nationalist government's effort to appropriate ordinary Chinese into its grand agenda of national salvation and rejuvenation. For a long time, scholars of modern Chinese history have argued that the ambitious plan of the Nationalist government to build a modern and strong state overreached its real capacity.⁹ Owing to the rampant corruption within almost all

⁹ Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution*.

levels of the bureaucracy, the absence of professionals in the government, the lack of interest of the Kuomintang (hereafter KMT) officials in rural areas, and the factionalism within the military and the party, the Nationalist regime failed in almost all aspects of its state-building projects and was in the end overthrown by the more organized and disciplined Communists.¹⁰

The image of the corrupt and incompetent Nationalist regime, however, has been under scrutiny since the 1990s. Using new approaches and recently unclassified archives, practitioners have been re-evaluating the achievement of the Nationalists. They contend that the economic policy of the Nationalist government was quite positive as both agricultural and industrial productivity during the Nanjing Decade (1927–37) made remarkable progress.¹¹ The officials in the bureaucratic institutions, the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular, are also viewed as efficient and professional despite facing tremendous stress and hardship.¹² The build-up of the military's strength to face the looming Japanese invasion was on the right track.¹³ The Nationalist government's diplomatic accomplishment in maintaining the sovereignty of the territory and ending extraterritoriality has also been appreciated.¹⁴

Whether the Nationalist state-building projects were a bunch of failures or not, few studies have ever paid attention to their changing strategies in the 1930s and 1940s. Ch'i His-sheng finds that the Nationalist conscription system had failed to work well since the beginning of the war and collapsed in the early 1940s due to the lack of interest of the

¹⁰ For scholarship that take this perspective, see Barbara Tuchman, *Sand against the Wind: Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–45* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1971); Tien Hung-mao, *Government and Politics in Kuomintang China, 1927–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972); Frank Dorn, *The Sino-Japanese War: 1937–41* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1974); Chi Hsi-sheng, *Nationalist China at War: Military Defeats and Political Collapse, 1937–45* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982); Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder out of China* (New York: Book of the Month Club, 1992); Edward Dreyer, *China at War 1901–1949* (London: Routledge, 1995); Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction*.

¹¹ Thomas Rawski, *Economic Growth in Prewar China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); David Faure, *The Rural Economy of Pre-liberation China: Trade Expansion and Peasant Livelihood in Jiangsu and Guangdong, 1870–1937* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1990); Loren Brandt, *Commercialization and Agricultural Development: Central and Eastern China, 1870–1937* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹² Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Politics*.

¹³ van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925–1945*, 131–169.

¹⁴ William Kirby, 'The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Era', *The China Quarterly* 150: June (1997): 433–458.

public, the commercialization of the recruitment process, and the corruption of the draft administration.¹⁵ Kevin Landdeck later contends that an alternative recruitment strategy was then designed by the Nationalists to mobilize educated young people to join the Intellectual Youth Army, which is largely a propaganda project instead of a fighting unit. By publicizing and publishing photographs and newspaper articles of how young students and professionals enthusiastically responded to the appeal of their nation and voluntarily joined the project, the Nationalists attempted to present an image that they were able to create the modern army of citizen-soldiers.¹⁶

In fact, the development of the Intellectual Youth Army marked a new trend in the Nationalist government's state-building strategies in the 1940s. Since the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Nationalists had found that they were in a good position to advertise China as a modern, responsible, and civilized power to earn respect and trust of its Western allies.¹⁷ In so doing, the Nationalist government not only expected to promote China's international status, which was essential to the legitimacy of the Nationalist rule,¹⁸ but also hoped to receive more material aids from its allies.¹⁹ Deeply frustrated over the repeated failures in almost all aspects of the state-building projects, the Nationalists had gradually put their faith on international recognition and Western aids, which they believed would help strengthen and centralize their rule back in China and facilitate the state-building projects in the end. As a result, the Nationalist

¹⁵ Chi Hsi-sheng, *Nationalist China at War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982).

¹⁶ Kevin Landdeck, 'Nationalist Military Service and Society in Wartime Sichuan', Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2011.

¹⁷ Sara Friedman, 'Civilizing the Masses: The Productive Power of Cultural Reform Efforts in Late Republican-Era Fujian', in Bodenhorn Terry ed., *Defining Modernity: Guomindang Rhetorics of a New China, 1920–1970* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 151–194; Ronald Ian Heiferman, *The Cairo Conference of 1943: Roosevelt, Churchill, Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang* (Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2011); Ryoko Iechika, 'The Basic Structure of Chiang Kai-shek's Diplomatic Strategy', *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 7:1 (2013): 17–34; Huang Tzu-chin, 'Embracing Mainstream International Society: Chiang Kai-shek's Diplomatic Strategy against Japan', *Chinese Studies in History* 29:4 (2016): 199–217.

¹⁸ Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924–25* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁹ John Miller, 'The Chiang-Stilwell Conflict, 1942–1944', *Military Affairs* 43:2 (1979): 59–62; Kuo Tai-chun, 'A Strong Diplomat in a Weak Polity: T. V. Soong and Wartime US-China Relations, 1940–43', *Journal of Contemporary China* 18:59 (2009): 219–231.

state-building projects in the 1940s were more propaganda-oriented rather than infrastructural and institutional expansion.²⁰

As Landdeck's study of the Intellectual Youth Army shows, the propaganda work in the 1940s merely targeted educated elites and foreign governments. This study further develops Landdeck's argument by exploring how ordinary Chinese responded to the changing strategies of the state-building projects. Taking the rise and fall of the Chinese Seamen's Wartime Service Corps, which was launched by the Nationalist government to train and discipline Chinese sailors in Calcutta during the Second World War, as a case, I contend in this chapter that ordinary Chinese failed to understand that the whole project was primarily propaganda, but perceived the conscription, training, and the discipline in the Corps as nothing more than the hotbeds of corruption, state violence, and exploitation. The study further elaborates how these sailors took different sorts of the art of (not) being governed to respond to the state interventions.²¹

It was not only the Chinese Nationalist authorities that had been attentive to the Chinese sailors in Calcutta, the British authorities also put their eyes on this group. This chapter further touches on the ambiguous attitude of the British colonial officials towards the Nationalist government's state-building projects. Since the fundamental legitimacy of the Nationalist rule in China depended on whether it could drive imperial and colonial elements out of the country and embed its nationalist and revolutionary ideologies into the mind of ordinary Chinese,

²⁰ Although the propaganda work had been an essential part of the Nationalist rule, the infrastructural and institutional expansion was the focus of the Nationalist state-building projects before the War of Resistance, see Julia Strauss, 'The Evolution of Republican Government', *The China Quarterly* 150:Special Issue: Reappraising Republic China (1997): 329–351; William Kirby 'Engineering China: Birth of the Developmental State, 1928–1937', in Wen-hsin Yeh ed., *Becoming Chinese: Passage to Modernity and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 137–160; Zanasi, *Saving the Nation*.

²¹ Michael Szony puts forward the concept of 'the art of being governed' to demonstrate that ordinary people living within the state have been developing different means to manipulate the regulatory regimes of the state control for their own interests rather than challenge the state directly. 'The art of being governed' is a response to James Scott's 'the art of not being governed', which has been used to describe the everyday resistance and avoidance of state control of the people living in upland Southeast Asia (Zomia). This book argues that ordinary people may employ both the art of being governed and the art of not being governed to facilitate their own agendas in different contexts. For 'the art of not being governed', see James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

most scholarships on modern Sino-British relations have highlighted the structural conflicts between the British and Nationalist authorities. Scholars tend to investigate how the Nationalists worked hard to weaken the British influence in China's treaty ports and how the British authorities designed countermeasures to undermine the authorities of the Nationalists and to safeguard their interests and privileges.²²

Robert Bickers, in his study of the British colonialism in modern China, argues that the relations between the British authorities and ordinary British such as businessmen, missionaries, and adventurers in China were complicated.²³ For most of the time, the British authorities and British subjects were not on the same boat but conflicted with one another. Inspired by Bickers' argument, I find that the interactions between the British and the Nationalist authorities were not merely stories of confrontation, mutual exclusion, and conspiracies against one another but were more practical and ambiguous. On certain occasions, the British colonizers and the Chinese Nationalists even chose to join their hands in the face of crisis from below.

In this chapter, the Chinese sailors who had been trapped in Calcutta since the outbreak of the Pacific War posed challenges to the British and Chinese authorities alike. To address the crisis, the British asked the Nationalist government to organize and discipline these sailors into proper labour forces, which would be employed in the British war effort in South and Southeast Asia. The establishment of the Corps and its conscription work among the Chinese sailors in Calcutta, however, made the British begin to worry about the expansion of the Chinese influence into

²² S. L. Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise: British China Policy, 1933–37* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975); E. W. Edwards, *British Diplomacy and Finance in China, 1895–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Jurgen Osterhammel, 'Semi-colonialism and informal Empire in Twentieth-century China: Towards a Framework of Analysis', in Wolfgang Mommsen and Jurgen Osterhammel eds., *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 290–314; Edmund Fung, *The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat: Britain's South China Policy, 1924–1931* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1991); Donna Brunero, *Britain's Imperial Cornerstone in China: The Maritime Customs Service, 1854–1949* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

²³ Robert Bickers, 'Shanghaianders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843–1937', *Past & Present* 159:May (1998): 161–211; Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture, and Colonialism, 1900–1949* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

South Asia. The suspicions of the British authorities and the resistance and desertion of the Chinese sailors failed the Corps.

The Anglo-Chinese Seamen Agreement 1942

Since the outbreak of the Second World War, British shipping companies had launched the War Risk Money for their European crews. An average European sailor was able to obtain at least £5 a month during the War as compensation for the risk they took for working at sea. Additionally, wages and compensation for the loss of life and injuries were also boosted for the Europeans.²⁴ Facing the same risk of being attacked by enemy warships and submarines, however, Chinese seamen working on British merchant ships at that time (there were around 20,000 such seamen in 1940) were denied any substantial increase in their salaries and welfare.²⁵ The British ship owners justified the different treatment of Chinese and European seamen by claiming the living standard in China was lower than that in Europe and that Chinese seamen were less skilful and efficient than their European counterparts.²⁶

Unhappy with the discriminatory treatment of their citizens, the Chinese Consul-General in London worked hard to pressure British shipping companies to promote the welfare of Chinese seamen by lobbying members of parliament in Britain and journalists to make the issue public.²⁷ Although some shipping companies agreed to grant Chinese seamen the War Risk Money and to increase their salaries, few promises were materialized.

This unequal treatment triggered widespread anger among Chinese seamen working on British ships across the world.²⁸ In February 1941, two merchant ships owned by the Glen Line arrived in Liverpool, and several hundred Chinese seamen working aboard asked the company to

²⁴ For the experience of Allied sailors in the Second World War, see Alston Kennerley, 'British Government Intervention in Seamen's Welfare, 1938-1948', *International Journal of Maritime History* 7: 2 (1995): 75-113; G. H. Bennett and Roy Bennett, *Survivors: British Merchant Seamen in the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003).

²⁵ AH, 020-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 25 January 1941.

²⁶ TNA, FO 371/31627, 'Chinese Seamen', 29 September 1942.

²⁷ AH, 020-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 25 January 1941.

²⁸ TNA, FO 371/27727, from K. T. Gurney to A. Cattle, 2 July 1941.

grant each man £5 of War Risk Money per month, the same amount the company already paid to its European seamen. As their request was declined by the company, a strike followed. All Chinese seamen refused to return to their ships to continue their work, and 49 of them were imprisoned by the local police after the British Ministry of Shipping accused them of desertion.²⁹ The Chinese Embassy in London launched its official protest against the British policy regarding the incident and warned that the Chinese government would not be held responsible if further strikes occurred.³⁰

By early 1942, most Chinese seamen had completed their contracts with British shipping companies. Few intended to return to the ships, given the low salaries and the dangers of being at sea. Instead, Chinese seamen wanted to either settle down in rich countries such as Australia and the United States or be sent back to China. However, neither did these rich countries want to accept their immigration nor could the British shipping companies repatriate them due to the Japanese occupation of the Chinese coast.³¹ Being trapped in ports across the world without any workable solution being put forward by shipping companies sparked radical actions from frustrated Chinese seamen. On 7 March 1942, Chinese seamen in Cairo launched a strike to ask for better welfare on board. As the British navy tried to neutralize the strikers, conflicts erupted. As a result, one Chinese seaman was killed, and 25 were imprisoned.³² One month later, in New York City, some 11 Chinese seamen working on the British ship *SS Silverash* clashed with the shipowner when the latter refused to pay their salaries. The shipowner opened fire and killed one seaman, while others were arrested on the charge of riot.³³ In Liverpool, Chinese seamen from the *SS Empress of Russia* demanded a bonus and allowances for their work. Being rejected by the shipowner, the Chinese refused to go back to the ship and clashed with the police, who came to arrest the strikers. Some of the police were seriously injured, and the bridge house of the ship was damaged during the clash. In the end, the

²⁹ AH, 020-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 7 February 1941.

³⁰ AH, 020-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 27 October 1941.

³¹ AH, 020-990600-2313, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 5, 30 May 1942.

³² AH, 020-990600-2313, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 5, 25 May 1942.

³³ AH, 020-990600-2313, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 5, 17 June 1942.

whole crew of over 400 Chinese was arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment and fines.³⁴

Although the Chinese seamen's strikes seriously disrupted British wartime transportation, British shipping companies were unable to replace the Chinese with others due to the lack of workforce in wartime Britain.³⁵ The British authorities had attributed the deep root of the grievance among Chinese seamen to the Chinese unhappiness with racial discrimination and admitted that improving the welfare of the Chinese could help remove the feeling.³⁶ The Chinese Nationalist government, in its turn, had long tried to take control of its seamen overseas and organize them into a disciplined force.³⁷ Pressing the British authorities to compromise on the issue of the seamen would not only promote the international status of the Nationalist government but also would strengthen its control over these subjects who had long been beyond the reach of the central government. Therefore, when the British authorities asked the Nationalist government to help address the crisis, the Nationalist government was all too ready to talk with the British on behalf of these sailors.

After months-long negotiation between the British Ministry of War Transportation and the Chinese Embassy in London, an agreement regarding the employment of Chinese seamen was reached in April 1942. The agreement regulated that all Chinese seamen working on British ocean-going ships could obtain £5 of War Risk Money per month, equal to the amount that European seamen received. Additionally, the salaries of Chinese seamen would be raised by £2 each month. Their contract would be 12-months long, and once they completed the contract, the seamen were granted a bonus that amounted to two months' salary. The Nationalist government, in its turn, had to guarantee that all Chinese seamen under contract should refrain from taking part in any strike and keep doing their jobs until the contract terminates.³⁸

The agreement had an effect in Britain, as most shipping companies there realized that Chinese seamen would only return to their work if

³⁴ TNA, FO 371/31627, 'Chinese Seamen', 29 September 1942.

³⁵ AH, 020-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 28 May 1942.

³⁶ TNA, FO 371/27727, from Anthony Steel to Mr. Gurney, 2 July 1941.

³⁷ Shen Guanbao, *Boxiadejiyi: Liwupu laoshanghai haiyuankoushushi* (An Oral History of the Shanghaiese Seamen in Liverpool) (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2008).

³⁸ AH, 020-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 24 April 1942.

the clauses in the agreement were implemented. Since the shipowners could not find any alternative groups of people in Britain to replace the Chinese, they had no other option but to cover the cost of employing Chinese seamen. Most of the Chinese sailors in Britain, who were neither willing to settle down in a war-torn place nor able to find any job on land, had agreed to continue their work on ships by June 1942.

Chinese Seamen Stranded

While Chinese seamen in Britain embraced the Anglo-Chinese Seamen Agreement and went back to work, their fellow citizens working for British shipping companies in other parts of the world reacted differently. Chinese seamen in Australia, for example, had little interest in continuing to work at sea, even though the agreement offered them much better treatment. Instead, most of them wished to settle down in Australia on the grounds that jobs at sea during wartime were just too dangerous for them to take.³⁹ In New York City, Chinese seamen seized every opportunity to desert into the Chinatown, despite their improved welfare on ships.⁴⁰ The deserting Chinese seamen reasoned that they were free to choose their own jobs. And since the shipping companies were unable to send them back to China in accordance with the contract, they had done nothing wrong in earning their livelihood in their host countries.⁴¹ The Australian and American authorities, however, tightened their border control to deny the immigration of these seamen. The British authorities also protested that the insubordination of Chinese seamen had seriously affected wartime transportation and would thwart the Allies' war effort.⁴²

Chinese seamen's desertion embarrassed the Nationalist government. Therefore, to maintain the Allies' wartime transportation and to save its face, the Chinese authorities tried to work out a plan to force the deserting seamen to return to their ships. In addition to reasserting that the

³⁹ AH,001-124503-00001-003, Waijiaobu, Zhongyinghaiyuanxiedingyuhaiyuantaowangchuli, 16 June 1942.

⁴⁰ TNA, MT 9/4370, from Scott to Dimock, 31 August 1942.

⁴¹ AH,001-124503-00001-003, Waijiaobu, Zhongyinghaiyuanxiedingyuhaiyuantaowangchuli, 16 June 1942.

⁴² Meredith Oyen, 'Fighting for Equality: Chinese Seamen in the Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1945', *Diplomatic History* 38:3 (2014): 548.

seamen would be treated equally with their European colleagues, the Chinese authorities proposed to dispatch specific groups of Kuomintang (KMT) officials to organize, supervise, and discipline the seamen in order to put them under the control of the central government and make them more obedient to the demands of the authorities.⁴³ One of the most influential organizations that were established by the KMT officials to control overseas Chinese sailors during the Second World War was the Chinese Seamen's Wartime Service Corps (the Corps) in India.

In the early 1940s, more than 90% of the Chinese seamen working on British ships were employed by Blue Funnel Line, Glen Line, Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Co. Ltd., Silver Line, and Ben Line.⁴⁴ A large part of the business of these shipping companies was in Asia. These companies' shipping lines, however, were cut off when the Pacific War broke out. Major ports in Asia, such as Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, and Rangoon, where the British shipping companies were running their business, were occupied by the Japanese. Since almost all Asian ports east of Burma were lost in early 1942, most shipowners had evacuated their ships back to India. By then, there were around 3,000 Chinese seamen stranded in Calcutta and 1,000 in Bombay.⁴⁵

When these Chinese seamen arrived in Calcutta, almost all refused to continue working at sea owing to several factors. Firstly, Chinese seamen felt that their pay was low and asked for an increase in their wages.⁴⁶ Secondly, they complained that their relatives would not receive any compensation from the shipping companies if they were killed or injured under enemy attack at sea. This complaint was partly because most seamen were illiterate, and they could not write down an exact address for reaching their relatives in China. Once an accident happened, the Shipping Masters in Indian ports were unable to find to whom the compensation money should be paid and therefore failed to complete the compensation. Thirdly, under the contract, the shipping companies held the responsibility to repatriate Chinese seamen back to China when the

⁴³ AH,001-124503-00001-003, Waijiaobu, Zhongyinghaiyuanxiedingyuhaiyuantaowangchuli, 16 June 1942.

⁴⁴ AH, 020-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 28 January 1942.

⁴⁵ KMTA, Te 13/17.46, 'Zhangongduigaojiganbu huiyianzhaiyao' (Wartime Service Corps senior cadres' conference minute), 4 July 1942.

⁴⁶ TNA, FO 371/31679, from Sir H. Seymour to Mr. Eden, 5 May 1942.

contract terminated and had to keep paying the seamen maintenance fees until they arrived in Chinese ports. Since the Chinese coasts and ports were all occupied by the Japanese, the shipping companies were unable to send the seamen back to China. Thus, they still needed to pay the maintenance fees. Unwilling to bear the burden, the shipping companies planned to stop the payments to Chinese seamen stranded in India.⁴⁷

Angry at their employers, Chinese seamen went to the Nationalist government for help. From December 1941 onwards, Chinese seamen stranded in Calcutta gathered in front of the local Chinese Consulate to ask the Consul-General Bao Junjian to speak for them. In April 1942, Bao Junjian held a talk with Sir Edward Cook, the director of the China Relations Office for the Government of India, regarding the issue of Chinese seamen. Bao Junjian raised the possibility of sending Chinese seamen back to China overland through northeast India and northern Burma. This proposal, however, was rejected by Sir Edward Cook on the grounds that the land route had been closed down as the Allied forces were overwhelmed by the Japanese army in Burma.⁴⁸

While Bao Junjian was trying to find a way to accommodate the stranded seamen, the news of the Anglo-Chinese Seamen Agreement reached India. According to the Agreement, Chinese crews of all British ocean-going ships could obtain increased wages, welfare, and War Risk Money. Most British ships in India by then, however, were coastal ships. Chinese seamen working on coastal ships were not involved in the arrangement of the Agreement.⁴⁹ Frustrated at the decision of the British authorities, the Chinese Foreign Ministry launched its official protest and asked the British to extend the Agreement to Chinese seamen in India. Worrying that Chinese seamen would turn to violence if they knew that they would not obtain the increased wages and bonus, the British Ministry of War Transport agreed on the extension of the Agreement to coastal ships in India.⁵⁰

Ironically, the Anglo-Chinese Seamen Agreement of 1942, which remarkably improved the working conditions for Chinese seamen in Britain, deprived Chinese seamen in India of their jobs. Expecting to get

⁴⁷ AH, 020-990600-2310, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 2, 25 June 1942.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ AH, 020-990600-2310, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 2, 17 June 1942.

⁵⁰ AH, 020-990600-2310, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 2, 31 August 1942.

higher salaries and extra welfare, Chinese seamen in India rushed back to their ships. The British shipping companies, however, were not ready to accept the Agreement. Unlike their counterparts in Britain, shipping companies in India did not have the problem of a shortage of sailors. In fact, there were adequate numbers of lascars in Indian ports by then.⁵¹ In the 1940s, to employ a lascar, the shipowners only needed to pay 54–75 Rupees a month (including salaries and bonus), while Chinese seamen's monthly wage stood at 65–125 Rupees. After the Agreement, the shipowners were also required to pay an extra £5 of War Risk Money. Additionally, the Chinese seamen's strikes across the world during that period made the shipowners worry about their discipline. For these reasons, the British shipping companies in India began to replace their Chinese crews with lascars in May 1942.⁵² From May to June 1942, big shipping companies, such as the Swire Co. and the Jardine & Matheson Co., were asking Chinese seamen to sign contracts that failed to give any substantial salary increase.⁵³ K. C. Wong, a Chinese seaman based in Bombay, reported that his shipping company tried to sign him on a job to Mombasa in East Africa with a contract of 125 Rupees per month, the same amount as he drew in Hong Kong before the War. He asked for the same treatment as the European sailors in accordance with the Agreement but was rejected and laid off.⁵⁴ Wong's case is by no means exceptional. As most Chinese seamen refused to sign the new contracts, they were laid off and replaced by Indians.

Stranded Chinese seamen in India became a source of social problems. In Calcutta, seamen stayed in the city's Chinatown at Bowbazar founded several gangs and set up more than 30 opium dens and another 30 gambling houses.⁵⁵ They not only sold opium to other seamen

⁵¹ Lascar is a term used to refer to Indian seamen working on European ships. For the labour relations between Indian lascar and their British employers, see Frank Broeze, 'The Muscles of Empire: Indian Seamen and the Raj, 1919–1939', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 18:1 (1981): 43–67; G. Balachandran, 'Conflicts in the International Maritime Labour Market: British and Indian Seaman, Employers, and the State, 1890–1939', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 39:1 (2002): 71–100.

⁵² AH, 020-990600-2313, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 5, 28 July 1942.

⁵³ AH, 020-990600-2310, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 2, 7 July 1942.

⁵⁴ NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), 1942, from K. C. Wong, Bombay to Wong Kwok Leung, Chungking, 10 October 1942.

⁵⁵ It is noted that the Chinese Indians had been setting up opium dens and gambling houses in Calcutta since the nineteenth century. In the 1920s, British visitors in Calcutta observed that the gambling and opium smoking were prevalent among the Chinese settlers living in Bowbazar, see Shelland Bradley, 'Calcutta's Chinatown', *Comhill Magazine* 57 (1924), in Xing, *The Chinese*

and drew them into gambling but also blackmailed and robbed other Chinese in the Chinatown.⁵⁶ A Chinese visitor in Calcutta observed that the Chinese seamen spent all their time in the gambling houses. Furthermore, to meet the gamblers' demands, even hairdresser's and tailor's shops in the Chinatown were turned into gambling dens: 'The moment one approaches Chinatown, there is no other sound to be heard except the sound of clicking the Ma-Jong pieces.'⁵⁷ Some seamen also asked the Chinese Consulate to arrange immediate repatriation for them because they had neither food nor accommodation in Calcutta. Their appeals, however, were repeatedly ignored by the deputy Consul-General Tan Wenqi. Impoverished seamen thus attributed their miserable life in India to the corruption of the Nationalist government officials and the discrimination of the British, and they claimed that they would rather kill all Chinese officials when the Japanese approached Calcutta.⁵⁸

Given the situation in Calcutta's Chinatown, the Government of India found that Chinese seamen would not only pose serious challenges in local society but also a potential threat to the defence of India.⁵⁹ A talk between the Bengal authorities and the Chinese Consul-General was held on 2 April 1942 to try to find a solution.⁶⁰ The Government of India proposed that Chinese seamen who had special working skills were allowed to look for jobs by themselves. Meanwhile, those who did not accept the shipping companies' contracts and were unable to find employment on land should be formed into a labour team in Calcutta. The corps should be led and organized by Chinese government officials while the Government of India would cover the cost of the corps.⁶¹ In fact, the British assumed that in setting up a labour corps, these troublesome seamen might be well

Community in Calcutta, 63-64. The influx of Chinese seamen in Calcutta during the Second World War dramatically boosted the business of opium dens and gambling houses in the city. The huge profits later drew some sailors to invest and set up their own opium and gambling business.

⁵⁶ KMTA, Te 13/15.9, 'Zhongguoliuyin haiyuantuanti diaocha baogao' (Report of the Chinese seamen in India), 11 October 1942.

⁵⁷ NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), 1942, from Lee Lan, Calcutta to Chang Hsing-chien, Kunming, 18 September 1942.

⁵⁸ KMTA, Te 13/2.5, 'Liangguanwuzhi wutiecheng baogao' (Report from Liang Guanwu to Wu Tieh-cheng), 5 May 1942.

⁵⁹ TNA, FO 371/31679, from Sir H. Seymour to Mr. Eden, 5 May 1942.

⁶⁰ AH, 020-990600-2309, Wajiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 17 April 1942.

⁶¹ Ibid., 16 April 1942.

disciplined and checked; also, they expected that the resulting highly disciplined labour force would contribute to the British war effort by being employed in projects such as the construction of the Calcutta docks and the road construction in Assam.⁶²

The proposal for setting up the seamen labour corps was embraced by the Nationalist government. Indeed, the ruling party of the Nationalist government, the KMT, had a long tradition of working with Chinese seamen in their strikes against British shipping companies in Hong Kong and Canton in the 1920s.⁶³ Since the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Chinese authorities had expected to take over some ships from the Axis Powers after they were defeated. Having a group of disciplined, professional, and patriotic seamen run those ships would dramatically strengthen the power of the Chinese navy. Therefore, the Nationalist government intended to turn the seamen labour corps into a platform that would breed a new generation of educated and trained seamen for the post-war development of the navy.⁶⁴ Additionally, since the Government of India asked the Nationalist government to send its officials to India to take charge of the seamen labour corps, the Chinese authorities had also harboured a plan to use intelligence agents as the officials of the corps to gather information regarding India's internal politics.⁶⁵

⁶² NAI, External Affairs Department File No. 502 (2)-X, from H. Weightman to Joint Secretary to the Government of India, 16 December 1942.

⁶³ For KMT's involvement in the strikes of the Chinese seamen in the 1920s, see Chan Ming Kou, 'Labor and Empire: The Chinese Labor Movement in the Canton Delta, 1895-1927', Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1975; Lu Quan, 'Beifachushihou de guangdonggongren yundong' (The Labor Movement after the Northern Expedition), *Lishiyanjiu* 3 (1997): 51-70; Bae Kyoungan, 'Beifachuqi guangdongdiqu de laodongyundong yu guominzhengfu de yingdui' (Reaction of the Republican Government to the Labor Movement in Guangdong at the Beginning of the Northern Expedition), *Journal of Nanjing University (Philosophy, Humanities and Social Sciences)* 5 (2004): 68-76; Anne Reinhardt, *Navigating Semi-Colonialism: Shipping, Sovereignty, and Nation-Building in China, 1860-1937* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018).

⁶⁴ KMTA, Te 13/2.5, 'Duifuyinzhangongdui tongzhi xunci' (Speech to the cadres of the Wartime Service Corps in India), 9 June 1942.

⁶⁵ KMTA, Te 13/13.128, 'Paifuyindugongzuorenyuan qiyuefeng gongzuoyuebao' (Monthly working paper of the staff in India in July), 20 August 1942.

Founding the Corps

Since the late Qing period, the Tongmenghui, a revolutionary party that vowed to overthrow the Qing court, had developed a few party members and supporters among the Chinese migrants in India. After the fall of the Qing Empire, the Tongmenghui was turned into the KMT. Some Tongmenghui members in India also joined the KMT and founded the headquarter of the KMT in India at 15 Weston Street, Calcutta. The main objectives of the KMT in India were to propagate its own ideologies (mainly Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles and the New Life Movement) through Chinese language newspapers (the *Chinese Journal*, the *Chinese Journal of India*, *India Kuo-Min-tang Headquarters Tri-Monthly*, and *Min-Shing*) and school curriculums among the Chinese sojourners and migrants living in the country.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, these KMT activities had been come to a halt at the time of the sailor crisis, mainly owing to the internal feud between two factions within the local party members since the 1930s.⁶⁷

As the Nationalist government accepted the proposal of organizing the troublesome seamen into useful labours, the KMT Central Bureau of Investigation and Statistics (CBIS), which was the main intelligence unit of the KMT, was given the job of organizing the Chinese Seamen's Wartime Service Corps (the Corps). By the end of June 1942, 20 KMT officials had been sent to Calcutta to do the preparation work for the Corps.⁶⁸

In July 1942, the KMT officials began to register Chinese seamen in Calcutta's Chinatown. Seamen were required to inform the officials of their names, place of birth, age, and occupation. The registration work, however, was not quite successful. For one month, only 1,710 seamen were registered, while another 1,500 showed no interest in the

⁶⁶ According to Zhang Xing, the educational curriculums of the Chinese schools in India can be mainly found in five works (*Yindu jiacheng meiguang xuexiao niankan*, *Yindu jiacheng meiguang xuexiao fuban shi zhounian jinian tekan*, *Yindu jiutergeda jianguo xuexiao wu zhounian jinian tekan*, *Peimei xuexiao xinxiao luocheng jinian tekan*, and *Xianggang lingliangtangersh zhounian jinian tekan*) published by Meiguang School, Jianguo School, and Peimei School in Calcutta, see Xing, *The Chinese Community in Calcutta*, 21.

⁶⁷ For a brief history of the KMT in India in the twentieth century, see Aripita Bose, 'The Kuomintang in India with Special Reference to Calcutta (1900-1962)', *Studies in History* 32.2 (2016): 257-269.

⁶⁸ TNA, FO 371/31679, from Sir H. Seymour to Mr. Eden, 7 July 1942.

registration.⁶⁹ To get more seamen in, some officials even went to their boarding houses to persuade them to join.⁷⁰ They told the seamen that the purpose of the Corps was to help them find jobs. Also, their work within the Corps would be helpful to the Allies' war effort and therefore was a sign of patriotism.⁷¹ Yet, the propaganda turned out to be so ineffective that only 60 more seamen were registered one month later. And even among those registered, few actually reported to the Corps.⁷²

In late September 1942, the Corps' camp in Tollygunge, south of Calcutta, was completed.⁷³ Some 700 registered seamen were brought to the camp for training. The training was divided into two parts, military and politics, and would last for three months. In the military part, the seamen would be taught how to collect information, fight guerrilla wars, basic military tactics, and shoot rifles and machineguns. In the politics part, the seamen would learn Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People, Chiang Kai-shek's teachings, and the main points of the New Life Movement.⁷⁴ The whole curriculum was designed by the officials to employ military discipline and nationalist ideology to transform the seamen into an effective unit that could be used in the military as well as construction tasks.

While the Chinese authorities were busy drawing unemployed seamen into the Corps and training them, the British were concerned with the deployment of the Corps. Since the cost of the Corps was almost wholly covered by the Government of India, it had spared no time in finding jobs for them. Initially, the Government of India and the Chinese Consul-General agreed that the Corps could be used to construct docks in Calcutta.⁷⁵ This proposal, however, was opposed by the British Department of War Transport because there was no shortage of labour force in the docks at

⁶⁹ KMTA, Te 13/13.130, 'Haiyuanzhangongdui gongzuobaogao' (Working report of the Corps), 18 September 1942.

⁷⁰ More than 1,000 Chinese seamen in Calcutta lived in seamen's boarding houses, which were arranged and paid for by shipping companies as a sort of maintenance for Chinese seamen who could not return to China.

⁷¹ NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), 1942, 'Chinese Seamen's War Time Service Corps', 14 September 1942.

⁷² KMTA, Te 13/13.130, 'Haiyuanzhangongdui gongzuobaogao' (Working report of the Corps), 18 September 1942.

⁷³ NA, RG 493, UD-UP 8, 95, from A. A. E. Franklin to Weightman, 12 December 1942.

⁷⁴ KMTA, Te 13/11.36, 'Zhongguoliuyin haiyuanzhanshi gongzuodui zongdubao' (The Chinese Seamen's Wartime Service Corps's headquarter report), 13 August 1942.

⁷⁵ TNA, FO 371/31679, from Sir H. Seymour to Mr. Eden, 7 July 1942.

Calcutta, as a large number of Indian labourers flocked to big cities to look for wartime job opportunities. Additionally, the local authorities warned that the use of Chinese labourers in a major Indian city at a time when the Indian nationalist movement was gaining momentum could lead to further anti-British sentiment.⁷⁶

A new plan of dispatching the Corps to Assam, northeast India, to build roads for the Allies was raised by the Government of India later. After being assessed by the Bengal Security Control Police and Calcutta Police Special Branch, this plan was withdrawn on security grounds. The local intelligence agents suspected that there were fifth columnists in the Corps and that the enlisted seamen in the Corps had no nationalistic outlook. Bringing the Corps to the forward areas, in their view, would be not only ineffective but also be dangerous as subversive elements in the Corps might influence other labourers employed in the same place.⁷⁷

The U. S. Army Service of Supply in India was later asked by the Government of India whether they had jobs for the Corps. Since the 10th U. S. Air Force was in urgent need of some 1,200 labourers to build an airfield in Gaya, southern Bihar, at the time, the U. S. Army Service of Supply had informed the Government of India that they were ready to employ the Corps and cover the cost.⁷⁸ This arrangement, however, was later dismissed by the Americans themselves as they found more than 3,000 local Indian labourers for the aerodrome construction work.⁷⁹

Realizing that they had poured a large amount of money into the Corps without any substantial return, the Government of India decided to take measures to reduce the costs. According to the agreement between the Chinese and Indian authorities regarding the welfare of the seamen in the Corps in May 1942, the Government of India was responsible for providing free clothing, food, and accommodation for the seamen of the Corps. Additionally, each seaman could get a monthly salary of 36 Rupees.⁸⁰ In August 1942, however, the Government of India informed the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta that they were considering

⁷⁶ NAI, External Affairs Department File No. 502 (2)-X, from H. Weightman to Joint Secretary to the Government of India, 16 December 1942.

⁷⁷ NA, RG 493, UD-UP 8, 95, from C. A. Osborne to Lt. Col. F. D. Merrill, 25 November 1942.

⁷⁸ NA, RG 493, UD-UP 8, 95, from General Headquarters, India to Colonel Crenshaw, 18 December 1942.

⁷⁹ NA, RG 493, UD-UP 8, 95, from F. D. M. to Commanding General, 26 November 1942.

⁸⁰ AH, 202-990600-2309, Wajjiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 26 May 1942.

cutting down the salary to 26 Rupees per month on the grounds that the income of the Chinese seamen should not be much higher than the average income of ordinary Indian workers, which amounted to 20 Rupees a month.⁸¹ The director of the Corps, General Lin Ben, protested that the decision to cut their salaries without consulting the Chinese would damage Sino-British cooperation in Calcutta. Although Lin Ben insisted that the Government of India should keep its original promise of paying the seamen 36 Rupees per month, their monthly salary was eventually set at 32 Rupees.⁸²

Exodus from Calcutta

When the Chinese and Indian authorities were considering the establishment of the Corps, the British shipping companies were also involved in the negotiation. Since the shipping companies were unable to repatriate Chinese seamen, they had been required to provide free food and accommodation until the Corp's launch. In addition, each unemployed seaman could obtain 1 Rupee a day as a maintenance allowance until he was enlisted into the Corps.⁸³ In this sense, the pay for working in the Corps (32 Rupees) was not attractive for those sailors who were receiving the maintenance allowance.

In a personal letter written by an unemployed Chinese sailor named Chiung I, he stated that he could get a maintenance allowance of 30 Rupees per month from the shipping company without doing anything. And even if he decides to accept the unprivileged contract of the British shipping companies and work at sea, he still could get at least 70 Rupees per month. Therefore, he was not at all interested in joining the Corps.⁸⁴

The inadequate payment was not the only thing that frustrated the seamen. Since the Chinese authorities began to plan the Corps, Chinese seamen in Calcutta had learnt that the Nationalist government's purpose

⁸¹ AH, 202-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 14 August 1942.

⁸² KMTA, Te 13/19.33, 'Chen Liren zhi wutiechengdian' (Telegraph from Chen Liren to Wu Tieh-cheng), 14 August 1942.

⁸³ AH, 202-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 14 August 1942.

⁸⁴ NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), from Chiung-I, Calcutta, to Han Ting-fong, New York, 11 November 1942.

was to discipline them and that the Corps was a military organization. Rumours had been spread among the seamen that once they joined the Corps, they would be conscripted into the army and would no longer be free to leave when they found more suitable jobs. They further worried that they would be sent to the forward areas to fight the Japanese.⁸⁵ Li Chun-sang, a Chinese seaman stranded in Calcutta, wrote to his friend that he heard the rumours regarding the enlistment of Chinese seamen into the navy and was not sure whether he would be forced to join the Corps or not. He missed his family and friends and did not want to be injured or killed on the battlefield.⁸⁶

Even those who had already joined the Corps complained that the training was so intensive and harsh that they intended to desert. Shih Chou was an unemployed seaman in Calcutta. When he was about to take a plane to return to China, the customs officials suspected him of engaging in smuggling and confiscated all of his money. With no other options, he joined the Corps but soon found that the training was so hard that he was thinking of running away.⁸⁷

Although the Chinese authorities in Calcutta repeatedly highlighted that all unemployed seamen (around 3,000 in 1942) must register with the Corps and move into the camp for training, there had been only around 700 seamen in the camp by the time when the Corps was officially inaugurated in October 1942.⁸⁸ The majority of the seamen chose to defy the government orders in either passive or confrontational ways.

Most seamen at the time shared a similar view to that of Chiung I: if they found a job on ships, even without the privileges that the Anglo-Chinese Seamen Agreement promised, they still could obtain at least 70 Rupees per month. But if they went to the Corps, they would have only 32 Rupees per month and have to go through the harsh training. In June 1942 alone, around 500 seamen in Calcutta chose to return to their ships or engage in doing business instead of joining the Corps.⁸⁹ Nevertheless,

⁸⁵ AH, 202-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 30 June 1942.

⁸⁶ NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), from Li Chun-sang, Calcutta to Li Chung, 23 October 1942.

⁸⁷ NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), from Shih Chou, Calcutta to Chou Shih-wei, 4 November 1942.

⁸⁸ KMTA, Te13/13.133, 'Wang T'ianxiangshang zongcai daidian' (Telegraph from Wang Tien-hsiung to Generalissimo), 10 October 1942.

⁸⁹ AH, 202-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 13 June 1942.

employment opportunities for Chinese seamen in Calcutta were scarce at the time. Those who were unable to secure a position in Calcutta went to Bombay.

When the Chinese authorities were planning the Corps in Calcutta in 1942, there were around 1,000 Chinese seamen in Bombay.⁹⁰ Similar to the situation in Calcutta, the seamen in Bombay had been widely engaging in gambling and drug trafficking.⁹¹ To address the problem, the Government of Bombay and the Chinese Consul had been asking all unemployed Chinese seamen in Bombay to join the Corps in Calcutta. This proposal, however, was turned down by the Government of India owing to the difficulties they had experienced in Calcutta in connection with the formation of the Corps there.⁹² It was not until 1944 that the Government of India began to seek to rein in the Chinese seamen in Bombay.⁹³ On learning that there would be less government intervention in Bombay at the moment, Chinese seamen in Calcutta who did not want to join the Corps and could not find local jobs fled to Bombay. In early October 1942, the Chou Seng Seamen's Boarding House in Calcutta, which accommodated around 1,000 unemployed Chinese seamen, reported to the Chinese Consul-General that several hundred seamen living there had left for Bombay.⁹⁴ The Chinese Consul in Bombay also complained that large numbers of unemployed seamen had flocked into Bombay from Calcutta and made the local situation more complicated.⁹⁵

Riots

In addition to fleeing from Calcutta to avoid being enlisted into the Corps, some 1,300 Chinese seamen stayed on to stand up against the authorities. From early 1942, Chinese seamen in Calcutta had set up

⁹⁰ KMTA, Te 13/11.5, 'Liuyinhaiyuan zhanshigongzuodui zuxun gongzuojinxing qingxing' (The process of organizing the Chinese Seamen's Wartime Service Corps in India), 7 August 1942.

⁹¹ AH, 020-011908-0019, Waijiaobu, Yindu jingdu ji Huaqiao kaishe duchangan, 8 July 1943.

⁹² NAI, External Affairs Department File No. 502 (2)-X, from O. C. Caroe to Joint Secretary to the Government of India, 16 December 1942.

⁹³ TNA, FO 371/53662, from Shipninder, London to N. W. T. R., Bombay, 24 July 1944.

⁹⁴ NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), 'Chinese Journal of India', 8 October 1942.

⁹⁵ AH, 020000039694A, Waijiaobu, Haiyuan liuyin gongzuo 1, 9 October 1942.

several mutual aid associations such as the Quarter Master's Club, the Seamen Athletic Association, and the Seamen Social Association based on their places of birth, occupations, and positions.⁹⁶ Since the Chinese Consul-General urged all unemployed seamen in Calcutta to join the Corps in September 1942, representatives of the associations had been sent to the Chinese Consulate to appeal. They claimed that the Chinese government was responsible for helping them to force the British shipping companies to keep paying the maintenance allowance under the contract instead of forcing the seamen to join the Corps.⁹⁷ In response to the seamen's appeal, the Chinese Consul-General Bao Junjian warned that the maintenance allowance would be cancelled after 1 November 1942 and that all unemployed seamen must register with the Corps before that date or face charges.⁹⁸

It was not only the ordinary seamen who were frustrated by the policy of forced enlistment, Chinese gambling houses in Calcutta, worrying that they might lose all of their customers after the enlistment, were also trying hard to find ways to spoil the Corps. Sponsored by gambling ring leaders Wang Fuh-seng of the Shanghai Wine Shop, Er Juh-han of the Shanghai Laundry Co.,⁹⁹ and Ko A-keng of the Central Teashop,¹⁰⁰ several minor associations were merged into the Chinese Seamen's Association for the Promotion of Virtue (CSAPV) to accumulate adequate strength to put pressure on the Chinese authorities.¹⁰¹

The CSAPV claimed that it aimed to organize Chinese seamen in Calcutta to assist the Chinese Nationalist government and its allies in fighting against Fascism. To fulfil this aim, the CSAPV vowed to

⁹⁶ According to an official report from the Chinese Consul-General, most of the Chinese seamen in Calcutta were from Ningbo, Shandong, and Fujian provinces, see NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), from N. Lai, Chinese Consulate General, Calcutta to Wang Chiao-yuan, Chungking, 4 June 1942.

⁹⁷ AH, 202-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 29 October 1942.

⁹⁸ NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), 'Chinese seamen statement by Chinese Consul-General, Calcutta', 12 October 1942.

⁹⁹ It is noted that the Shanghai Laundry Co. (also known as the Shanghai gongsi) existed into the twenty-first century. Zhang Xing finds that the Shanghai Laundry Co. was founded by two Wenzhou merchants in the 1930s on the Russell Street in central Calcutta, see Xing, *The Chinese Community in Calcutta*, 119.

¹⁰⁰ These gambling ring leaders usually used their companies or shops to cover their gambling business, see NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), from Kan Ying-chuan, Calcutta to General Chiang Kai-shek, Chungking, 30 July 1942.

¹⁰¹ NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), 'Chinese seamen statement by Chinese Consul-General, Calcutta', 12 October 1942.

give guidance to the seamen based on the principles of the New Life Movement and help them to get back to their proper work.¹⁰² The membership of the organization was open to all seamen in Calcutta, and unemployed sailors were not required to pay any membership fees. More importantly, the CSAPV stressed that it would represent all members in negotiating with employers to obtain more jobs.¹⁰³ Given the fact that the New Life Movement was a mass mobilization and education movement endowed by Chiang Kai-shek, it seems that the CSAPV did not seek a complete break from the Chinese authorities by clinging to the Chinese official discourse.¹⁰⁴ Through promising to introduce proper jobs to its members instead of persuading them to join the Corps, however, the CSAPV intended to win over the support of more Chinese sailors and to illegitimatize the agenda of the Corps.

The Corps was officially launched on 24 October 1942 with merely 734 members.¹⁰⁵ Although Chiang Kai-shek wrote in appreciation of the effort and sacrifice of the seamen and encouraged them to demonstrate patriotic and nationalist spirit in India, this did not strengthen the legitimacy and popularity of the Corps.¹⁰⁶ In the following weeks, the CSAPV organized several hundred unemployed seamen to gather around the Chinatown in Calcutta to protest the government policy.¹⁰⁷ Local overseas Chinese community leaders such as Li Dayue and Ni Ruwei were beaten up, owing to their pro-government attitude and donations to the Corps. Restaurants, hotels, and shops, whose owners were friendly to the Nationalist government, were looted or burned down. Protesters accused

¹⁰² NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), 'The Chinese Seamen's Association for the Promotion of Virtue', 3 November 1942.

¹⁰³ NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), 'Rule of Membership, Chinese Seamen's Association for the Promotion of Virtue', 4 November 1942.

¹⁰⁴ For the academic debate on the New Life Movement, see Dirlik, 'The Ideological Foundations of the New Life Movement'; Culp, 'Rethinking Governmentality'; Ferlanti, 'The New Life Movement in Jiangxi Province, 1934-1938'; Wen-nan, 'Guixunrichang-shenghuo: Xinchenghuoyundong yu xiandai guojia zhili' (Disciplining Everyday Life: The New Life Movement and the Governance of the Modern State).

¹⁰⁵ AH, 202-990600-2309, Wajiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 23 October 1942.

¹⁰⁶ KMTA, Te 13/13.184, 'Haiyuanzhangongdui chengli jiangweiyuanzhang dianbanxunci' (Message from Generalissimo Chiang to the inauguration ceremony of the Corps), 22 October 1942.

¹⁰⁷ Chinese seamen also tried to forward their case to the British authorities and protested in front of the office of the Harbor Master of Calcutta. However, since neither the British shipping companies nor the Government of India was willing to pay the maintenance allowance anymore, their negotiation with the British had turned out to be fruitless, see NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), 'Seamen News', 26 November 1942.

the Chinese authorities of betraying the sailors and deliberately harming the seamen's interests in exchange for aid from Western powers.¹⁰⁸

The situation in Calcutta had been worsening since the British shipping companies cancelled all maintenance allowance on 1 November 1942. Furious seamen even threatened to burn down the Corps' camp and to humiliate the Nationalist government by hanging Sun Yat-sen's portrait around beggars' necks.¹⁰⁹ To address the crisis, Chiang Kai-shek sent the chief commander of the Chinese Expeditionary Force (CEF) Luo Zhuoying to Calcutta in early November 1942.¹¹⁰ When Luo Zhuoying summoned some 3,000 seamen to the Meiguang School in Calcutta's Bowbazar Chinatown and attempted to persuade those who rejected the enlistment to join the Corps and serve the nation, he was booed by some seamen who insisted that they only cared about the maintenance allowance. Brawls and fights between Luo's bodyguards and angry seamen followed, and Luo Zhuoying was only rescued by Calcutta police later.¹¹¹

Since the seamen launched their demonstrations in October 1942, the Government of India had watched the incident carefully and put forward two possible solutions to the Chinese Consul-General. The Calcutta police could either arrest all dissidents and send them to the Corps or ask the Chinese authorities to conscript the seamen and send them to the CEF in Ramgarh.¹¹² The Chinese Consul-General Bao Junjian worried that if the Chinese authorities allowed the Calcutta police to arrest Chinese seamen by force, its authority would be greatly weakened among overseas Chinese, and seamen in particular. Bao Junjian instead proposed that the Nationalist government could invoke the Conscription Act to declare that all troublemaking seamen were soldiers and ask the CEF to send Chinese military police to arrest them.¹¹³

On the morning of 4 December 1942, more than 400 seamen gathered in front of the Chinese Consulate in Calcutta, asking the Nationalist

¹⁰⁸ AH, 202-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 25 October 1942.

¹⁰⁹ KMTA, Te 13/13.138, 'Wang Tianxiong zhi Wu Ticheng baogao' (Report from Wang Tien-hsiung to Wu Tieh-cheng), 8 December 1942.

¹¹⁰ The Chinese Expeditionary Force was established in early 1942 to help the British defend Burma. As Burma fell into the hands of the Japanese, part of the Chinese Expeditionary Force retreated into India. The Allies then decided to regroup and train the Chinese Expeditionary Force in Ramgarh, northeast India.

¹¹¹ KMTA, Te 13/15.10, 'Zhang Bide baogao' (Report of Zhang Bide), 10 November 1942.

¹¹² AH, 202-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 28 October 1942.

¹¹³ AH, 202-990600-2309, Waijiaobu, Haiyuanxieding 1, 29 October 1942.

government to distribute a maintenance allowance. The seamen further claimed that if they could not get the money, they would burn down all Chinese authorities' office buildings in Calcutta and cut ties with the Nationalist government. In the afternoon, a group of CEF military police suddenly rushed into the crowds from the Consulate building and began to take seamen into custody. Meanwhile, around 500 Indian policemen from the Calcutta police blocked off the site and helped the operation. In total, 447 seamen were arrested and transported to Ramgarh that day.¹¹⁴

The incident of 4 December was the beginning of the end of the Chinese seamen's crisis in Calcutta. Less than one month after the incident, most unemployed seamen either joined the Corps or left Calcutta. Leaders of the CSAPV were arrested and court-martialled on the charge of being Communists or fifth columnists.¹¹⁵ Gambling houses run by seamen were closed.¹¹⁶ In a report telegraphed from the director of the Corps, Wang Tianxiong,¹¹⁷ to the KMT Central Committee, Wang said, 'there are now more than 1,400 seamen in the Corps. The work of the Corps is now on the right track, and the crisis of the seamen has been successfully solved.'¹¹⁸

The Fall of the Corps

On the morning of 5 December 1942, American soldiers guarding the railway station of Ramgarh in northeast India found a train of more than

¹¹⁴ KMTA, Te 13/16.7, 'Bao Junjian zhiwaijiaobudian' (Pao Chun-chien to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 5 December 1942.

¹¹⁵ To tag the ring leaders of the seamen riots as Communists and fifth columnists, the Nationalist government was actually trapped by its own nationalist discourse, in which only anarchist Communists and traitors were against the Chinese nationalist agenda. At the same time, ordinary Chinese were taken for granted as nationalists. Nonetheless, no evidence in the archives indicates that the leaders of the CSAPV are Communists and fifth columnists.

¹¹⁶ KMTA, Te 13/16.12, 'Bao Junjian zhiwaijiaobudiao' (Pao Chun-chien to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 20 December 1942.

¹¹⁷ The first director of the Corps, Lin Ben, left the Corps due to his conflicts with other officials in the Corps. Wang Tianxiong, who was close to Wu Ticheng, the head of the KMT Central Committee, was then appointed as the director of the Corps in October 1942. Wang Tianxiong was later replaced by Liu Yiling in 1943. Liu Yiling remained the director of the Corps until the end of the war in 1945.

¹¹⁸ KMTA, Te 13/16.26, 'He Yingqin zhi Wutichenghan' (Telegraph from He Yingqin to Wu Tich-cheng), 1 September 1943.

400 Chinese prisoners.¹¹⁹ General Hayden Boatner, the Chief of Staff of the U. S. Army Forces in India, however, refused to let these Chinese prisoners enter into Ramgarh. In a telegraph to Joseph Stilwell, the chief commander of the China-Burma-India Theatre, Boatner warned that the incoming Chinese prisoners were seamen who had been rioting in Calcutta and that these seamen could not be made into soldiers. Boatner further stated that the presence of the seamen in Ramgarh would not only increase the burden of the administration for the Americans but also impact the morale of other Chinese soldiers.¹²⁰ The Chinese Consul-General was upset by the American rejection and argued that the conscription of the Chinese seamen into the CEF was a matter for internal affairs of the Nationalist government, in which the Americans had no right to intervene.¹²¹

Under the intervention of Stilwell and Chiang Kai-shek, Boatner eventually agreed to detain the seamen in a group under guard in Ramgarh.¹²² Nevertheless, Boatner held the opinion that these seamen were of no use for the American war effort and their detention in Ramgarh was merely a waste of American resources. In a telegraph to Stilwell, Boatner indicated that he was too ready to let the seamen leave if they wished.¹²³ The detained seamen did leave, thanks to the careless watch of the Americans. By September 1943, 318 detained seamen had fled from Ramgarh. Some of them returned to the Chinatown in Calcutta, while others went to Bombay.¹²⁴

Such desertion also took place in Calcutta. Although the number of seamen in the Corps reached more than 1,200 after the 4 December incident, most of them did not intend to serve in the Corps for the long term. Whenever the seamen found opportunities, they deserted the Corps.

¹¹⁹ Although Ramgarh was used to accommodate and train the Chinese troops, the town was managed by the U. S. Army at the time. All supplies of the CEF in Ramgarh were also provided by the U. S. Army.

¹²⁰ NA, RG 493, UD-UP 218, 36, from Gen. Boatner to Gen. Stilwell, 5 December 1942.

¹²¹ KMTA, Te 13/16.7, 'Bao Junjian zhiwaijiaobudian' (Pao Chun-chien to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 5 December 1942.

¹²² NA, RG 493, UD-UP 218, 36, from AMMRAM, Ramgarh to AMMISCA, Chungking, 8 January 1943.

¹²³ NA, RG 493, UD-UP 218, 36, from AMMRAM, Ramgarh to AMMISCA, Chungking, 11 December 1943.

¹²⁴ KMTA, Te 13/16.26, 'He Yingqin zhi Wutichenghan' (Telegraph from He Yingqin to Wu Tieh-cheng), 1 September 1943.

The check on desertion was also rather loose, as the Corps officials themselves were either trying to return to China or engaging in smuggling in India.¹²⁵ By the end of 1943, there were fewer than 500 seamen still in the Corps.¹²⁶ As the desertion went on, both the Chinese and the Indian authorities found that it became unnecessary to maintain the Corps. In 1944, the Corps entered its ending stage as its numbers went down to around 100. The remaining seamen were old and sick and therefore unable to find proper jobs. The discharge of the Corps lasted well into 1946 when all seamen were repatriated to China.

Conclusion

In September 1942, an article was published in *Zhongyangribao*, the official mouthpiece of the Nationalist government, in appreciation of the Chinese seamen in India. In the article, Chinese seamen were described as patriotic and brave fighters stranded in India. While the morale of the seamen was in decline in the foreign land, the Nationalist government came to help. Thanks to the aid the government brought to the seamen in India, they regained their courage and were determined to join the training the government organized. The seamen all expressed that they would fight for the Chinese nation.¹²⁷ One month later, a Chinese seaman wrote a letter to his friend in Chongqing, in which he complained that the organization work of the government in India was in a mess and that many seamen had already left the Corps for better-paid jobs.¹²⁸ The contradictory narratives between the official narratives and the personal experience shed light on the deep tension between the Chinese nation and the ordinary Chinese during the Second World War.

¹²⁵ KMTA, Te 13/14.17, 'Wang Tianxiong zhi Wu Tiecheng dian' (Telegraph from Wang Tien-hsiung to Wu Tieh-cheng), 20 April 1943.

¹²⁶ KMTA, Te 13/13.7, 'Liuyinhaiyuan zhangongdui gongzuobaogao' (Working report of the Corps), 24 December 1943.

¹²⁷ 'Zhongyongde zhongguohaiyuan zai yinducanjia xunlian' (Patriotic Chinese Seamen are taking part in training in India), *Zhongyangribao*, 14 September 1942.

¹²⁸ NAI, External Affairs Department 572-X/42 (Secret), from Chen Sung-shae, Calcutta to Shun Gee Joun, Chungking, 17 October 1942.

In the early days of the Second World War, conflicts between Chinese seamen and their employers occurred across the world owing to their inferior treatment. The Nationalist government saw the conflict as an opportunity to appropriate the seamen into the nationalist agenda. Although the Anglo-Chinese Seamen Agreement of 1942 literally gave Chinese seamen almost the same treatment their European counterparts enjoyed, Chinese seamen stranded in India were disadvantaged due to the competition from the cheaper local workforce. Facing the looming social problems caused by unemployed Chinese seamen in Calcutta's Chinatown, both the Nationalist government and the Government of India tried to organize the seamen into a disciplined body for their respective interests. The effort to govern the seamen by enlisting them into the Chinese Seamen's Wartime Service Corps, however, failed because the concerns and appeal of the seamen were different from those of the Nationalist government and British colonial authorities. Some seamen chose to run away from the reach of the authorities by returning to their ships or fleeing to Bombay, while others stayed on in Calcutta to confront the official agents by setting up their own organizations and using a similar nationalist rhetorics. The confrontation between the Chinese authorities and the seamen led to severe riots in Calcutta. Chinese seamen intensively challenged the Chinese government's nationalist discourse by tearing apart portraits of Sun Yat-sen and announcing their break with the Nationalist government. Whereas most unemployed seamen either were arrested or joined the Corps after the riots, they chose the art of not being governed by deserting from the Corps and the detention camps. In the end, the large-scale desertion of the seamen sealed the fate of the Corps and the government's failed effort to nationalize and discipline its subjects.

This chapter demonstrates how the Chinese and British authorities tried to coordinate an institution that could be employed to control, check, discipline, and take advantage of the Chinese sailors stranded in Calcutta and how these sailors developed various strategies to respond to the encroaching power of the state authorities. The Corps, however, is by no means the only state-building project the Chinese Nationalist government initiated in wartime India. The Nationalist government also worked hard to promote the privileges of its army officers in India. This effort, however, was used by ordinary Chinese to facilitate their smuggling

between India and China. In telling the experiences of three Chinese smugglers in Calcutta in the next chapter, I will show how the Nationalist government tried to set up institutions and regimes in India to rein in the rampant India-China smuggling and how the British authorities saw the Chinese counter-smuggling regimes in India as conspiracies against India's sovereignty.

3

Smugglers

On the afternoon of 5 January 1943, a dozen Indian police officers broke into a shophouse in Park Street, Calcutta. Their target was Chen Mengzhao, a Chinese businessman who had been accused of making tremendous profits through smuggling contraband from India to China. When the policemen entered the second floor of the shophouse, they found Chen Mengzhao and two other Chinese, Gao Wenjie and Wang Li-an, as well as large quantities of medicines, jewels, and clothes, which the police believed would be smuggled to China.¹ Later investigations indicated that all three men were involved in India-China smuggling in different patterns. Chen Mengzhao ran his smuggling enterprise through a collaboration with an American pilot who took the contraband into China on his flights. Gao Wenjie, disguised as a Chinese army officer, evaded custom checks. Wang Li-an was authorized by a Chinese government sector to travel to India for the purpose of smuggling medicines back to China. Although Chen Mengzhao, Gao Wenjie, and Wang Li-an were unfamiliar with one another and their smuggling businesses were unrelated, the uncovering of their experiences in Calcutta sheds new light on our understanding of the smuggling in modern China and India.

Smuggling, State-Building, and Colonial Anxieties

In recent years, a growing number of studies have been produced to explore the interaction between modern state-building and smuggling in China.² The Chinese government under Nationalist rule tried hard to

¹ AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang Chen Mengzhaoan, 6 January 1942.

² This study understands that the term 'smuggling' is a product of state construction. The state authorities determined what kind of activities were smuggling, what kind of commodities were contraband, and who were smugglers. In this study, both 'smuggling' and 'smugglers' are either defined by the Chinese or British authorities for pursuing their respective interests.

build a strong central state through regulating and taxing foreign trade.³ Ordinary people, however, had to pay higher prices for their daily commodities due to increased regulations and taxes.⁴ To evade state control, smuggling through China's coastal areas had become widespread by the 1920s and 1930s. The Nationalist government saw the smuggling as a menace to its revenue and as a challenge to the state-building ambitions. In fighting against the smuggling, the Nationalist government progressively expanded the state capacity by centralizing its legal authority and advancing its reach over almost all aspects of economic life. Ironically, as Philip Thai observes, smuggling in modern China did not undermine the state authority but dramatically strengthened it.⁵

Scholars studying smuggling in colonial India, however, pay less attention to the state-building aspect.⁶ In fact, the British colonial authorities

For the smuggling and modern nation-building in a wider range, see C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Cyrus Schayegh, 'The Many Worlds of Abud Yasin: or, What Narcotics Trafficking in the Interwar Middle East Can Tell Us about Territorialization', *American Historical Review* 116:2 (2011): 273–306; Peter Andreas, *Smuggler Nation: How Illicit Trade Made America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Michael Kwass, *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Andrew Cohen, *Contraband: Smuggling and the Birth of the American Century* (New York: Norton, 2015). For the specific relations between smuggling and state in modern China, see Samuel Adshhead, *The Modernization of the Chinese Salt Administration, 1900–1920* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); Susan Mann, *Local Merchants and the Chinese Bureaucracy, 1750–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Alan Baumler, *The Chinese and Opium under the Republic: Worse than Floods and Wild Beasts* (Albany: State University of New York, 2007).

³ Parks Coble, *The Shanghai Capitalists and the Nationalist Government, 1927–1937* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); Edward Slack, *Opium, State, and Society: China's Narco-Economy and the Guomindang, 1924–1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001); Toru Kubo, 'The Tariff Policy of the Nationalist Government, 1929–36: A Historical Assessment', in Kaoru Sugihara ed., *Japan, China, and the Growth of the Asian International Economy, 1850–1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 145–176; Zanas, *Saving the Nation*; Felix Bocking, *No Great Wall: Trade, Tariffs and Nationalism in Republican China, 1927–1945* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017).

⁴ Marie-Claire Bergere, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie, 1911–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁵ Philip Thai, *China's War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State, 1842–1965* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 26.

⁶ One of the exceptions is Tansen Sen's study of the Chinese activities in Kalimpong from the 1940s to the 1960s. By employing reports and archives produced by the colonial and post-colonial Intelligence Branch of West Bengal at the State Archives in Calcutta, Sen uncovered the India-China smuggling engaged by both Indians and Chinese (including those Chinese who disguised as Tibetans), see Tansen Sen, 'The Chinese Intrigue in Kalimpong: Intelligence Gathering and the "Spies" in a Contact Zone', in Tansen Sen and Brian Tsui eds., *Beyond Pan-Asianism: Connecting China and India, 1840s–1960s* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020): 410–442.

in India were concerned more with its own security, both internal (threat from Indian nationalists) and external (threat mainly from Russia), than of building India into a centralized modern state.⁷ Amar Farooqui argues that smuggling in western India as conducted by indigenous groups was a systematic and organized effort to undermine the colonial monopoly of India's economy and challenge the colonial regime.⁸ While Kate Boehme does not agree that the smuggling in colonial India was a planned subversion against the Raj, she persuasively demonstrates how the Government of India imagined and constructed smuggling as a subversive enterprise, which not only damaged the colonial economy but was designed to overthrow the British rule altogether.⁹ Jonathan Hyslop's study of Indian sailors' gun smuggling in the 1920s further shows that although sailors' motivations of smuggling weapons were largely for making profits, colonial officials always tended to correlate their activities to nationalist and revolutionary movements.¹⁰ In other words, while the Chinese Nationalist government's concern of smuggling was primarily due to its state-building ambitions, the Indian colonial authorities' fight against smuggling can be attributed to its anxieties of the survival of British colonial rule.

However, scholars on smuggling in both modern China and India have largely confined their discussions within the boundaries of the two countries. Since most smuggling took place across the border, their influence had been transnational instead of merely national. Eric Tagliacozzo

⁷ Regarding the internal threat, the Government of India's primary concern was the Indian nationalist movement, and the revolutionary terrorism in particular. Durba Ghosh's study of Indian revolutionary terrorists is a good entry point for understanding how the internal threat shaped the modern nation-state in India, see Durba Ghosh, *Gentlemanly Terrorists: Political Violence and the Colonial State in India, 1919–1947* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017). To counter the emerging internal threat, the British Raj developed a sophisticated network of intelligence, see James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*. Regarding the external threat, the British authorities were specifically worried about the Russian expansion in central Asia, see Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence*; Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856–1907*.

⁸ Amar Farooqui, *Smuggling as Subversion: Colonialism, Indian Merchants, and the Politics of Opium, 1790–1843* (Washington D. C.: Lexington Books, 2005). Farooqui's argument has later been challenged by Claude Markovits, who contends that the Indian smuggling was the result of opportunism and residual leakage instead of the organized resistance of the Indians, see Claude Markovits, 'The Political Economy of Opium Smuggling in Early Nineteenth Century India: Leakage or Resistance', *Modern Asian Studies* 43:1 (2009): 89–111.

⁹ Kate Boehme, 'Smuggling India: Deconstructing Western India's Illicit Export Trade, 1818–1870', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 25:4 (2015): 685–704.

¹⁰ Jonathan Hyslop, 'Guns, Drugs and Revolutionary Propaganda: Indian Sailors and Smuggling in the 1920s', *South African Historical Journal* 61:4 (2009): 838–846.

convincingly demonstrates how the interplay between colonial states and smugglers in Southeast Asia contributed to the formation and construction of borders in British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. In this case, the British Malayan government's measures and regulations against the smugglings along the Straits of Malacca led to the response of the Dutch colonial authorities in the East Indies, which was determined to build up its own authority against the underground trades and tax evasion. Therefore, the smuggling in colonial Southeast Asia not only gave rise to the colonial state's border construction programs of mapping, lighting, surveillance, and patrolling but also sowed the seeds for the decades-long competition, negotiation, and collaboration between the Dutch and British colonial authorities around containing the smuggling.¹¹ Nisha Mathew's study of the gold smuggling between Dubai and Bombay before and after the Partition further elaborates that the cross-boundary smuggling reflected not only local/regional economic activities but the broader context of the international monetary politics of the time.¹²

Taking Chen Mengzhao's smuggling enterprise as a case, this chapter argues that most smuggling in modern India and China was undertaken in transnational contexts and resulted in transnational effects. Although numerous scholars have already pointed out that the participants of smuggling in modern Asia could be all nationals, most studies have paid specific attention to the Chinese smugglers in modern Chinese smuggling and Indians in modern Indian smuggling. Westerners, whether they were colonial custom officials in India or Western staff of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service in China, were most likely described as anti-smuggling policymakers.¹³ In this chapter, I try to unearth a smuggling

¹¹ Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). For further discussions on the relations between state-building projects and smuggling in island Southeast Asia, see Rudolf Mrazek, 'From Darkness to Light: The Optics of Policing in Late-Colonial Netherlands East-Indies', in *Figures of Criminality in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Colonial Vietnam*, ed. Vicente Rafael (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1999), 23–46; Eric Tagliacozzo, 'The Lit Archipelago: Coast Lighting and the Imperial Optics in Insular Southeast Asia, 1860–1910', *Technology and Culture* 46:2 (2005): 306–328.

¹² Nisha Mathew, 'At the Crossroads of Empire and Nation-State: Partition, Gold Smuggling, and Port Cities in the western Indian Ocean', *Modern Asian Studies* 54:3 (2020): 898–929.

¹³ For the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, see Robert Bickers, 'Revisiting the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, 1854–1950', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36:2 (2008): 221–226; Hans Van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past: The Maritime Customs Service and the Global Origins of Modernity in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

gang that was composed of Chinese merchants and American pilots and suggests that it was this transnational collaboration that facilitated the India-China smuggling. Additionally, previous studies have largely set state-building projects against smuggling activities. In other words, by suppressing the smuggling, the state centralized its power and expanded its authority to almost all aspects of socio-economic life. Nevertheless, this chapter shows that the Nationalist government's state-building project as an effort to promote its army officers' privileges abroad ended up facilitating smuggling.¹⁴ Finally, as Nisha Mathew points out, the discursive and analytic framework surrounding the debate on smuggling has been divided into an oversimplified dichotomy, the smuggler on one side and the state on the other.¹⁵ This study shows that state was sometimes also trapped by their own restrictions and regulations and had to resort to smuggling.

Overall, in this chapter, I will tell a story of the trajectories of three men who were involved in the wartime India-China smuggling and coincidentally stayed under the same roof of a shophouse in Calcutta until the police officers arrested them on the afternoon of 5 January 1943. In telling the story, I contend that the Chinese Nationalist government's effort in obtaining its army officers privileges in India facilitated the India-China smuggling. The Nationalist government, in its turn, saw the smuggling as a blemish to its international status and tried to set up checkpoints in India to contain the illegal trade. The British authorities, instead, regarded both the Chinese smuggling and the Chinese government's efforts to control it as a grand conspiracy that would eventually harm the security and sovereignty of the Raj. The different considerations of the Chinese and British authorities and their mutual misunderstandings led to the end of Chinese immigration to India in 1945.

¹⁴ Scholarship on the smuggling in postcolonial India has already noted that flawed economic policies and corrupt bureaucratic machinery did more to facilitate, rather than prevent, smuggling, see Jagdish Bhagwati and Bent Hansen, 'A Theoretical Analysis of Smuggling', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 87:2 (1973): 172-187; A. Vaidyanathan, 'Consumption of Gold in India: Trends and Determinants', *Economic and Political Weekly* 34:8 (1999): 471-476.

¹⁵ Through analysing the smuggling in occupied China during the Second Sino-Japanese War, Lloyd Eastman demonstrates that the relations between smugglers and state were rather ambivalent, see Lloyd Eastman, 'Facets of an Ambivalent Relationship: Smuggling, Puppets, and Atrocities during the war, 1937-1945', in Akira Iriye ed., *The Chinese and the Japanese: Essays in Political and Cultural Interactions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 275-303.

By elaborating on the interactions between the states and smugglers, this study contributes an alternative angle to understanding wartime Sino-British relations. Previous studies have highlighted that the tensions between the Chinese and British authorities in India during the Second World War can largely be attributed to Chiang Kai-shek's vocal support for the Indian nationalist movement and the rampant Chinese smuggling activities in India.¹⁶ I contend in this chapter that it is not the smuggling itself that concerned the British authorities and pushed it to take actions against the Chinese immigration in India, but the Chinese Nationalist government's effort to control the smuggling in India. In other words, the British authorities were less worried about the Chinese smuggling activities in India than the Chinese government's attempts to discipline the Chinese in India, which the British thought was a Chinese conspiracy to encroach on British interests.

Chen Mengzhao's Smuggling Gang

Chen Mengzhao (Chen Mou Chou, as shown in his passport) was born in Sichuan province, China, in 1908. In January 1940, he applied for a passport in Yunnan in order to do business trading watches and medicines in Annam and Burma. While he was still in Burma in early 1942, the Japanese army overwhelmed the Allies and cut off the Burma Road used to transport supplies to the Chinese Nationalist government. As Burma fell into the hands of the Japanese, refugees, mostly Indians and Chinese who had migrated to Burma during the colonial period, fled to India.¹⁷ Since returning to China was impossible, Chen Mengzhao had decided to follow the refugees to India and settled down in Calcutta by April of 1942.¹⁸

¹⁶ Aron Shai, 'Britain, China and the End of Empire', *Journal of Contemporary History* 15:2 (1980): 287–297; Lin Hsiao-ting, 'Erzhanshiqi zhongyingguanxizaitantao: yinanyawentiweizhongxin' (Reconsidering Sino-British Relations during World War II: Centered on the South Asia Problem), *Jindaishiyanju* 4 (2005): 32–56; Christopher Murphy, "'Constituting a Problem in Themselves': Countering Covert Chinese Activity in India: The Life and Death of the Chinese Intelligence Section, 1944–46', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 44:6 (2016): 928–951.

¹⁷ For the refugees from Burma after the Allied defeat in 1942, see Hugh Tinker, 'A Forgotten Long March: The Indian Exodus from Burma, 1942', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 6:1 (1975): 1–15.

¹⁸ AH, 020-011904-021, Waijiaobu, Lvyingduqiaoshang ChenMengzhaoan, 7 January 1943.

While in Calcutta, Chen Mengzhao immediately found that he could continue his watch and medicine trading business by engaging in smuggling. The loss of Burma made airborne transportation between India and China essential for the Nationalist government and ordinary Chinese alike to obtain materials and commodities from the outside world.¹⁹ Since wartime hyperinflation and the blockade of China had made all sorts of goods either too expensive or inaccessible for most Chinese, merchants had been able to make great profits by exporting commodities from India to China.²⁰ In 1939 the Government of India imposed strict rules of export. Commodities that were perceived to be crucial to India's economic stability and defence were prohibited to be exported while others required an Export Permit from the government and to pay a required tax. It was reported that if one spent 16,000 Rupees to buy goods in India and smuggled them into China for sale, they could make 80,000 Rupees.²¹

Having learned of the opportunity to make extraordinary profits by bringing contraband, jewels, and medicines from India to China, Chinese passengers of the Chinese National Aviation Corporation (CNAC), then in charge of civilian flights, enthusiastically took part. In June 1942, Lu Ken Chun, a Kunming resident, asked his friend Y. T. Hia in Calcutta to try his best to buy as many cigarette papers as possible and bring them back to Kunming through the CNAC flights. Lu Ken Chun highlighted that he had already bribed the officials in the Chinese Finance Bureau and asked Y. T. Hia to write the name of the Chinese Financial Bureau on all goods to evade the customs checks in Calcutta and Kunming. Lu was

¹⁹ The airborne transportation between India and China during the war was given the name 'the Hump'. The Hump was primarily used by the American 10th Air Force and the Chinese National Aviation Corporation over the Himalayas to transport supplies into China and ferry personnel between China and India. For details on the Hump, see John Plating, *The Hump: American Strategy for Keeping China in World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011).

²⁰ For the inflation in wartime China, see Chou Shun-hsin, *The Chinese Inflation, 1937-1949* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Arthur Young, *China's Wartime Finance and Inflation, 1937-1945* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); Zhou Chun, *Zhongguokangrizhanzhengshiqi wujiashi* (A history of the commodity prices in China during the War of Resistance) (Chengdu: Sichuandaxue chubanshe, 1998); Parks Coble, *Chinese Capitalists in Japan's New Order: The Occupied Lower Yangzi, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Frederic Wakeman, 'Shanghai Smuggling', in Christian Henriot and Wen-hsin Yeh eds., *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 116-149.

²¹ 'Zhongyinhangkongxian zhi zousizhe' (Smugglers in the Sino-India Air Route), *Mingquoribao*, 28 January 1943.

confident that they would get a very good profit on these cigarette papers in Kunming.²² In July 1942, Li Tingcai, a CNAC passenger who travelled from Calcutta to Chongqing, was found in possession of six parcels of medicine, which he intended to sell on the black market in China. Two months later, another CNAC passenger was found guilty of smuggling more than 40 parcels of contrabands from Dibrugarh to Kunming.²³

The colossal extent of the smuggling trade from India to China drew the attention of the Government of India and the Chinese Nationalist government.²⁴ For the Government of India, the smuggling was not only a challenge to its wartime restrictions on exports but also impaired its tax income. For the Nationalist government, the smuggling depleted China's already exhausted foreign exchange reserve and discredited its official image.²⁵ Both sides were determined to take action against the rampant smuggling. The Government of India strengthened its custom check-in Calcutta.²⁶ Custom officials were required to check the luggage of all civilian passengers who travelled between India and China before they boarded the flight.²⁷ The Nationalist government, in its turn, also tightened the inspection over commodities brought by passengers from India. In late 1942 the Nationalist government even stopped issuing passports to private merchants²⁸ who intended to go to India in an effort to crack down on smuggling.²⁹

Chen Mengzhao was well informed of the Sino-India smuggling rush by the time he arrived in Calcutta and decided to join the lucrative business. In June 1942, he bought some watches, a few lady's dress pieces, and

²² NAI, External Affairs 572-X/42 (Secret), from Lu Ken Chun, Kunming to Y. T. His, Calcutta, 25 June 1942.

²³ AH, 020-991100-0024, Waijiaobu, Xianzhifuyin caigouwuzi 1, 5 October 1942.

²⁴ TNA, FO 371/31627, from Major Winterborn to P. Broad, 27 September 1942.

²⁵ TNA, FO 371/31679, from Sir H. Seymour to Mr. Eden, 21 October 1942.

²⁶ It should be remembered that smugglers not only used the air route to smuggle goods from India into China. Land routes through Kalimpong and Darjeeling into Tibet were more often used during the Second World War. Nevertheless, the land route smuggling was engaged by ordinary merchants even before and after the war, while the air route smuggling was often carried out by a specific group of people (soldiers, government officials, and high-profile politicians) whose illegal activities drew special attention from the British authorities. Since this book deals with those specific groups of people who drew the attention of both Chinese and British authorities, the focus has been kept on the air route smuggling.

²⁷ TNA, FO 371/31679, from Sir H. Seymour to Mr. Eden, 21 October 1942.

²⁸ It is noted that Tibetans or Chinese disguised Tibetans did not need a Chinese passport to travel to India. In fact, Tibetans were not recognized by the British authorities as Chinese citizens at the time.

²⁹ AH, 020-991100-0025, Waijiaobu, Xianzhifuyin caigouwuzi 2, 24 October 1942.

powder in local markets (all of these commodities were prohibited from importation by the Nationalist government) and asked another Chinese man, Chang Tzu-tsai, to bring them to Kunming for sale. Although Chang Tzu-tsai hid the watches in his pocket and other items in a box, they were still found and confiscated by the Chinese customs officials in Kunming.³⁰

The loss of the fortune, however, did not discourage Chen Mengzhao from continuing his smuggling business. He tried to find means to evade the newly established regimes of custom control and inspection in both India and China. After the fall of Burma in May 1942, the CNAC was mainly responsible for the civilian transportation between India and China. Due to the lack of qualified and experienced Chinese pilots, they hired American pilots.³¹ The Government of India had long noticed that some of the American pilots who worked in India and China were active participants in smuggling.³² In September 1942, J. A. Porter, an American pilot employed by the CNAC for the Calcutta-Kunming flight, was discovered in the act of smuggling 50 bars of gold on his aircraft.³³ In fact, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Department of the Theater Corps of Military Police reported around 300 smuggling cases in the India-Burma-China Theatre from 1942 to 1944. They were valued at more than \$4,000,000 and involved American pilots affiliated with the U.S. Army, the CNAC, and the American Volunteer Group (the Flying Tigers).³⁴

Knowing that American pilots were exempted from custom checks in both Calcutta and Kunming, Chen Mengzhao decided to find partners for his business. Through a Calcutta-based Chinese merchant Kong Qingfu, Chen Mengzhao came to know a CNAC pilot, J. Curler, who agreed to join the smuggling business. Chen Mengzhao also involved his friend Ge Zunxian, who worked as staff in the Kunming branch of the Chuankang

³⁰ NAI, External Affairs 572-X/42 (Secret), from Chang Tzu-tsai, Kunming to Mr. M. C. Chen, Calcutta, 25 June 1942.

³¹ For the activities of the CNAC during the war, see Yao Jun, *Zhongguo hangkongshi* (A History of China's Aviation) (Zhengzhou: Daxiangchubanshe, 1998); Jiang Changying, *Zhongguohangkongshi: Shihua, Shiliao, Shigao* (A History of Chinese Aviation: Stories, Primary Sources, and Drafts), (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2000); Li Jun and Lin Minghua, *Zhongguo minyonghankongshi* (A History of the Chinese Civil Aviation), (Beijing: Zhongguo minhang chubanshe, 2019).

³² TNA, FO 371/46194, from Governor of Assam to Acting Viceroy, 19 April 1945.

³³ NAI, Home Political, E_1943_NA_F-3-11, from A. E. Porter to the Secretary, 15 January 1943.

³⁴ 'Hump Smuggling Ring Exposed by Army', *Roundup*, 21 December 1944.

Bank, as his agent in Kunming. In August 1942, Curler brought the medicine Chen Mengzhao purchased in Calcutta onto his flight destined for Kunming. The whole process went smoothly, and no customs officials checked Curler's luggage in the airports of Calcutta and Kunming. After Ge Zunxian sold these medicines on the local black market, the gang made a considerable profit. Inspired by the dividend, they carried out a second trial one month later, which, again, turned out to be successful.³⁵

By October 1942, Chen Mengzhao had earned around 600,000 Rupees through his smuggling business. With such enormous wealth in his possession, he rented a two-floor shophouse on 12 Stephen Court, 18 Park Street, Calcutta, and established his own company, the M. C. Chen Trading Co. Indian Branch.³⁶ The first floor of the building was his company's office, while the second floor was to be used as a storeroom for commodities.³⁷ In order to socialize with senior Chinese officials in Calcutta and court their protection, Chen Mengzhao bought two cars for their use.³⁸

In November 1942, Chen Mengzhao contacted Curler and Ge Zunxian for further smuggling. This time, Chen Mengzhao prepared two packages of medicines and jewellery valued at around 300,000 Rupees. On 25 November 1942, Curler took the two packages of goods for Kunming, with the expectation that they would harvest a great profit.³⁹

Gao Wenjie as a Fake Army Officer

After the fall of Burma, Chinese merchants became aware of the lucrative business of smuggling Indian commodities into China. Commodities that were portable in size and valuable in China market, such as gold, jewellery, watches, fountain pens, medicine, and cloth, were trendy.⁴⁰

³⁵ AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang ChenMengzhaoan, 11 March 1943.

³⁶ The reason why Chen Mengzhao chose to settle down in Park Street was probably that he tried to stay away from the attention of the Chinese and Indian authorities, both of which had been focusing on the crimes and unrest in the Chinatowns throughout the war.

³⁷ AH, 020-011904-021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang ChenMengzhaoan, 22 February 1945.

³⁸ AH, 020-011904-021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang ChenMengzhaoan, 7 January 1943.

³⁹ AH, 020-011904-021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang ChenMengzhaoan, 12 December 1942.

⁴⁰ AH, 020-991100-0024, Waijiaobu, Xianzhifuyin caigouwuzi 1, 2 September 1942. Portable commodities such as jewels and clothes were popular in the India-China smuggling because they were easy to carry on flights.

As large numbers of Chinese merchants began participating in the Sino-India smuggling, the Government of India became concerned that the stockpiles of certain commodities would be depleted and that the resulting increases in commodity prices would enrage ordinary Indians. To contain the smuggling, in October 1942, Indian customs authorities set strict rules to restrict the volume of the commodities a passenger could carry while leaving the country.⁴¹ The tightened rules of Indian customs influenced the business of Gao Wenjie, who arrived in Calcutta from China in early 1942 and was involved in the Sino-India smuggling of medicines.⁴² Realizing that he might lose a good deal of profits due to these changes, Gao Wenjie started to consider means of evasion.

After the defeat in Burma, the Allies had to use India as the supply base to support China's war effort. From 1942 to 1944, more than 60,000 Chinese soldiers were transported to the Ramgarh Training Center in northeast India for training.⁴³ Chinese military officers were frequent visitors to India, attended talks with their British and American counterparts, and procured military equipment. Nevertheless, the Chinese Nationalist government found that the procedures of applying to visit India and the customs check for its officers were complicated. Furthermore, a number of Chinese army officers were rudely searched and even bullied by Indian customs officials upon arrival.⁴⁴ These incidents were regarded by the Nationalist government as discrimination by the British imperialists against the Chinese. Arguing that the Chinese were now fighting with the British and should be treated as an equal ally, the Nationalist government requested the Government of India to offer the Chinese respect and privileges. In so doing, the Nationalist government was actually fulfilling its long-held nationalist goal of terminating Western supremacy over the Chinese and promoting China's

⁴¹ TNA, FO 371/35753, from Secretary of the Government of India to Foreign Office, 10 November 1943.

⁴² AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyingduqiaoshang Chen Mengzhaoan, 11 March 1943.

⁴³ The Ramgarh Training Center used to be a colonial internment camp that was used to house Italian and German citizens. After negotiation with both the Chinese and the American authorities, the Government of India agreed to turn the internment camp into the training center for the Chinese Expeditionary Force, see Yin Cao, 'Establishing the Ramgarh Training Center: The Burma Campaign, the Colonial Internment Camp, and the Wartime Sino-British Relations', *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 9:1 (2020): 1–10.

⁴⁴ AH, 020-011903-0003, Waijiaobu, Wozaijiashelihangjiansuo yujianhuiguojunmin, 29 May 1944.

international status as a great power. With the condition that the British officers would also enjoy the same treatment in China, the British authorities agreed to facilitate the visa application procedures and exempt the customs check of the luggage of Chinese officers in uniform.⁴⁵

In wartime China, the Nationalist forces were heavily involved in the smuggling between Japanese occupied regions and free China.⁴⁶ Army officers either took bribes from smugglers or engaged in the smuggling business themselves. The army-involved smuggling among the Nationalist forces became so prevalent that some senior generals warned that the discipline and morale of the Nationalist troops would soon collapse.⁴⁷ Since the China-India trade was extraordinarily profitable and the army officers were exempted from customs check, some Chinese officers began trying to find reasons to visit India and smuggle Indian commodities back to China.⁴⁸

On 15 March 1943, Captain Fu Zejun, a staff officer of the Chinese army, was boarding a CNAC flight to travel from Calcutta to Kunming. While passing Indian customs in the airport, the customs officials found that his luggage, a wooden box, exceeded the allowed maximum weight of 36 pounds. Despite Fu Zejun's protest that he should be exempted from the custom checks as a Chinese army officer, Indian customs opened the box and found gold bullion valued at around 10,000 Rupees. Since gold was not allowed to be exported from India at the time, the customs officials confiscated the gold bullion on the spot.⁴⁹ Four months later, Colonel Zhang Yongzhang of the Chinese army was stopped at the airport of Calcutta, and the customs check found gold bullion in his luggage.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ AH, 020-011903-0021, Waijiaobu, Zhanshiwojunchuruyinjing youguanshixiang, 8 October 1942.

⁴⁶ For the army involved in smuggling in wartime China, see Qi Chunfeng, 'Kangzhanshiqi guotongquyu lunxianqujian zousimaoyi shulun' (A Study of the smuggling between occupied China and the Nationalist rule areas during the War of Resistance), *Minguodangan* 1 (1999): 3-5; Qi Chunfeng, 'Kangzhanshiqi guotongqu de tongyouzousimaoyi' (The smuggling of tung oil in the Nationalist rule areas during the War of Resistance), *Kangrizhazhengyanjiu* 1 (2012): 123-130; Chang Yunping and Zhang Ge, 'Lunzhuanmaishiqi kangzhandahoufangde shitangzousi: Yichuanyudiquweili de kaocha' (The sugar smuggling in the home front during the War of Resistance: A case study in Chongqing and Sichuan), *Lishijiaoxue* 6 (2016): 40-46.

⁴⁷ 'Guzhangguan gaojiegejiguanzuo yanjingzousiyingshang' (General Gu prohibited all officers from smuggling), *Fujianribao*, 3 December 1942.

⁴⁸ AH, 002-090106-00016-007, Jiangzhongzheng zongtongwenwu, Lingxiuzhishibubian 16, 16 November 1942.

⁴⁹ AH, 020-011903-0018, Waijiaobu, Zhuyinyuanzhengjun canmoufuzejunan, 16 March 1943.

⁵⁰ AH, 020-01904-0001, Waijiaobu, Zhangyongzhangan, 30 July 1943.

These smuggling cases were by no means exceptions. In fact, the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta reported to the Chinese Foreign Ministry in early 1943 that Indian customs had uncovered a large number of smuggling cases carried out by Chinese army officers and thus suspected that the Nationalist government was deliberately encouraging the smuggling through the exploitation of the mutual exemption agreement.⁵¹

Knowing that an army identity would be greatly helpful in evading the custom check, Chinese merchants began to impersonate Chinese army officers. The constantly changing and sometimes self-conflicting policies and instructions of the Chinese authorities often confused the Government of India in its effort to check the identities of the Chinese in India. In a report of the External Affairs Department of the Government of India, it was claimed that the Chinese often entered India as civilians and were later employed in India by the Chinese authorities as army officers. This move confused the Government of India to such an extent that it complained that it was almost impossible to distinguish the Chinese army officers from their imposters.⁵² The Chinese Nationalist government also admitted that a growing number of Chinese merchants were engaging in the smuggling between Calcutta and Assam by disguising themselves as Chinese army personnel.⁵³

Back in Calcutta, Gao Wenjie learned about the new strategy of impersonation. He introduced himself as a colonel of the Chinese Expeditionary Force who had come to India to execute a secret assignment. To make this identity more authentic, he even bought some fake documents in Calcutta's Chinatown at Bowbazar.⁵⁴ Under the cover of his new identity, Gao Wenjie's medicine business prospered as Indian customs exempted his luggage transported to China. In late 1942, while Gao

⁵¹ AH, 020-011903-0018, Waijiaobu, Zhuyinyuanzhengjun canmoufuzejunan, 31 March 1943.

⁵² NAI, Home Political, E_1945_NA_F-16-49, from Lt. Col. A. Napier to External Affairs Department, New Delhi, 14 June 1945.

⁵³ AH, 020-011908-0001, Waijiaobu, Liuyilingbei yindupolinglijing, 10 July 1944.

⁵⁴ The business of producing fake identity documents for Chinese travelers was rampant in Calcutta during the war, see AH, 020-011903-0015, Waijiaobu, Soubuzhuyindu guojuntaobing 1, 16 October 1945. It is noted that this business was conducted both by wartime sojourners and Chinese Indians. The fake document business should be a wartime invention in India on the grounds that wartime arrangements allowed certain kinds of waivers for some groups of people travelling between India and China.

Wenjie was looking for a storeroom to pack the large quantities of medicines in preparation for the next trip, a friend told him that a Chinese merchant Chen Mengzhao had a large storeroom on Park Street. After talking with Chen Mengzhao, Gao Wenjie rented the second floor of Chen Mengzhao's shophouse for storing his medicines.⁵⁵

In Chen Mengzhao's storeroom, Gao Wenjie encountered Wang Li-an, who introduced himself as the Aerospace Defense Command staff officer of Yunnan Province in Kunming. Since Gao Wenjie was worried that his fake identity would be exposed if he met officers from the Chinese Expeditionary Force, who frequently paid visits to Calcutta, he had decided to choose Wang Li-an's unit as his affiliated institution, which was rarely known in Calcutta at the time. Gao Wenjie secretly bought a new fake identity document which identified him as a colonel of the Aerospace Defense Command of Yunnan Province.⁵⁶

Wang Li-an's Assignment in India

Since the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the Chinese Nationalist government had been in urgent need of almost all sorts of medicines. The supply of medicines, however, was in extreme shortfall after the loss of the Burma Road.⁵⁷ On the other side, the Government of India also imposed strict restrictions on the export of medicines out of India.⁵⁸ By 1942, it was not only civilians who had to rely on the black markets to get medicines at very high prices, even the Nationalist government had difficulty in obtaining the necessary medicines for its troops.

Under the urgent request of the Nationalist government, the Government of India agreed to supply the Chinese with certain

⁵⁵ AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang ChenMengzhaoan, 19 April 1943.

⁵⁶ AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang ChenMengzhaoan, 7 January 1943.

⁵⁷ For the shortage of medicines in wartime China, see Zhang Wangqing, 'Luelunhuaqiao duizuguo kangzhan de yiyao zhiyuan' (The support of medicines from overseas Chinese during the War of Resistance), *Jiangxishehuikexue* 9 (2010): 167–170; Yang Jing, 'Qianxikangzhan shiqi sichuanxiyao jinquedezhuyao yuanyin' (A brief study of the shortage of medicines in Sichuan during the War of Resistance), *Bianjiangjingjiyuwenhua* 2 (2016): 126–127; Shi Xiaotong and Tao Xinxin, 'Kangrizhanzhengqijian zhongguojundui de yaopinglaiyuantanjiu' (A study of the supplies of the medicines for the Chinese troops during the War of Resistance), *Kejiadaokan* 1 (2017): 160–161.

⁵⁸ NAI, Home Political, EW_1939_NA_F-21-161, from Secretary to the Government of India to the Department of Commerce, 25 September 1939.

medicines.⁵⁹ In July 1942, the Chinese Indian Medicine Consultation Committee (CIMCC) was set up in Chongqing to facilitate the export of medicines from India to China.⁶⁰ It was regulated that Chinese government departments should firstly draft a list of the specific medicines they needed, and send the list to the CIMCC for reviewing. If the application were approved by the CIMCC, the list would further be forwarded to the Indian Medical Department to investigate whether the required medicines were available for export from India. And if the feedback were positive, an export license would be granted to the applicants. With the export license in hand, the applicants could then apply for a visa for its agents to come to India to purchase the medicines.⁶¹

In May 1942, Kunming suffered an outbreak of cholera and malaria due to the inflow of refugees from Burma.⁶² Although the Government of India donated around five million tablets of quinine to help the Chinese control the epidemic, local hospitals were still running out of stock.⁶³ The hospital of the Aerospace Defense Command of Yunnan Province (ADCYP) in Kunming was among those that did not have adequate medicines to treat the patients.

In October 1942, the ADCYP formally asked the Department of Health of the Nationalist government in Chongqing to help arrange the import of some necessary medicines from India. The Department of Health forwarded the list of the required medication to the CIMCC for review. In early November, the CIMCC sanctioned the application of the ADCYP (except anaesthetic, which was inadequately supplied in India) and forwarded the list of the medicines to the Indian Medical Department in New Delhi for final approval.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Different from the attitude of the Government of India, the Indian National Congress was enthusiastic about providing medical support to the Chinese during the war. A medical mission of five Indian doctors was dispatched by the Indian Congress to China in 1938. For the story of the Indian medical mission to China, see B. K. Basu, *Call of Yanan: Story of the Indian Medical Mission to China, 1938–43* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2003).

⁶⁰ 'Yinduyaopingyuanhua' (The supplies of Indian medicines to China), *Zhongyangribao*, 3 July 1942.

⁶¹ AH, 020-991100-0026, Waijiaobu, Xianzhifuyincaigouwuzi 3, 9 December 1944.

⁶² 'Kunmindahunluan: Eyimanyan' (The chaos in Kunming: the epidemic spreading), *Dongyachengbao*, 24 May 1942; 'Kunming eyimanyan' (The epidemic is spreading in Kunming), *Dashubao*, 24 May 1942.

⁶³ 'Yinduzengwokuning' (The viceroy donated quinine to China), *Shengbao*, 1 August 1942.

⁶⁴ AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyingduqiaoshang Chen Mengzhaoan, 22 June 1943.

As the ADCYP was ready to send its staff to India for the procurement of medicine, it found that the Indian Medical Department failed to issue the appropriate export license. Furthermore, the follow-up messages about the missing export license to the Indian Medical Department received no response, probably due to the Indian authorities being overwhelmed with a large number of requests from China.⁶⁵ Unable to procure a visa, the ADCYP's plan of purchasing the medicines from India was indefinitely delayed.

Having been losing patience, the ADCYP decided to send its staff to India to complete the procurement by themselves. Wang Li-an, a staff officer of the ADCYP, was selected to be in charge. To obtain a visa for India, Wang Li-an did not reveal to the British Consul in Kunming that he was going to India to procure medicines. Instead, Wang Li-an produced documents signed by the director of the ADCYP, General Lu Guofan. It was stated that Wang Li-an was assigned to India to study India's air defence system. Since there was no restriction for Chinese officers to study in India, the British Consul issued him a visa.⁶⁶

Wang Li-an arrived in Calcutta in early December 1942. In order to purchase as many medicines as possible in the short term, he asked his friends to introduce him to someone who had channels and experience in Calcutta. His friends told him that there was a Chinese merchant who was making large-scale medicine trade here. The name of that Chinese merchant was Chen Mengzhao.

After paying the commission fees and rent, Chen Mengzhao agreed to help Wang Li-an find medicines in local black markets and let him stay in his shophouse on Park Street. By the end of the year, Wang Li-an had purchased approximately 500 pounds of medicines that were valued at around 80,000 Rupees and packed them in the storeroom of Chen Mengzhao's shophouse. This was the same storehouse that Gao Wenjie used for storing his medicines.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ During the Pacific War, most Chinese government departments and organizations looked to India for resources and materials. Some of these institutions even had their own agents in India for procuring commodities. Being overwhelmed by the large numbers of procurement from the Chinese, the Government of India repeatedly expressed its concern about addressing these requests promptly, see AH, 020-991100-0024, Waijiaobu, Xianzhifuyincaihousuzi 1, 4 March 1943.

⁶⁶ AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang Chen Mengzhaoan, 20 April 1943.

⁶⁷ AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang Chen Mengzhaoan, 25 March 1943.

Saving the Face of the Chinese Nation and Securing the British Raj

In November 1942, the commander of the Chinese 5th Air Force, Wang Shuming, received intelligence that uncovered the activities of an international smuggling gang. It was reported that certain Chinese merchants in India were smuggling precious medicines and jewels from India into China by collaborating with American pilots. Wang Shuming immediately forwarded the intelligence to Claire Chennault, the commander of the US 14th Air Force that was based in China, and asked him to take action.⁶⁸ On the night of 25 November 1942, American military police checked a CNAC flight as it landed in the airport in Kunming and found two packages of medicines and jewels that valued more than 300,000 Rupees.⁶⁹

By interrogating the pilot of the flight, it was found that the packages were supposed to be given to Ge Zunxian, a staff of the Chuankang Bank in Kunming. The Chinese authorities later arrested Ge Zunxian and searched his residence. Correspondences and letters found in Ge Zunxian's house indicated that he had a trading partner named Chen Mengzhao in Calcutta. The two had become deeply involved India-China smuggling with the help of the American pilot, J. Curler.⁷⁰

The uncovering of a smuggling case that involved both overseas Chinese and Americans enraged Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, who thought the crime not only harmed the national economy but also seriously damaged the reputation of the Chinese nation.⁷¹ Under Chiang Kai-shek's personal instruction, the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta asked the Government of India to arrange the arrest of Chen Mengzhao.⁷² Since Chen Mengzhao had long been suspected by the local authorities of engaging in illegal trade, the Government of India agreed to take action against him.⁷³

⁶⁸ AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang Chen Mengzhaoan, 12 December 1942.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ 'Chen Mengzhao Ge Zunxian zousihuoli gechusixing' (Chen Mengzhao and Ge Zunxian were sentenced to death due to smuggling), *Zhongyangribao*, 20 October 1943.

⁷¹ AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang Chen Mengzhaoan, 12 December 1942.

⁷² Ibid., 22 December 1942.

⁷³ Ibid., 6 January 1942.

On the afternoon of 5 January 1943, Calcutta police stormed Chen Mengzhao's shophouse at Park Street. At that time, Chen Mengzhao, Gao Wenjie, and Wang Li-an were all in the house. They were surprised by the police search and tried to flee. After a brief fight, the police took Chen Mengzhao into custody and confined the others to their rooms.⁷⁴ A large number of commodities such as medicines, clothes, and jewels were also discovered at the site and temporarily sealed.⁷⁵

Although the Chinese Nationalist government paid specific attention to the case of Chen Mengzhao and highlighted its seriousness, the Government of India was not much impressed by his conduct. In fact, international smuggling was rampant in India during the war due to the wartime shortage and the government's restrictions on export. In western India, the Iraqi Jews dominated the smuggling business between India and the Middle East. They came to India under cover of traders with business visas. Once they arrived in India, they went to the local black markets and purchased large quantities of commodities such as tea, sugar, silk, and cotton that were highly profitable in the Middle East. These commodities were then hidden in ships and smuggled out of India.⁷⁶ To contain the smugglings of the Iraqi Jews, the Government of India imposed strict border checks. Once the smuggling was exposed, the smugglers would be immediately deported and would not be granted another visa.⁷⁷

What made India-China smuggling different from other smuggling patterns in wartime India was the sensitive identities of the smugglers. Since the US and China were wartime allies of the British, their army officers enjoyed privileges in India. American and Chinese officers were not

⁷⁴ Since Gao Wenjie and Wang Li-an both claimed that they were Chinese army officers, the Calcutta police did not arrest them but asked the Chinese Consulate to check their identities. After checking with the ADCYP, the Chinese Consulate found that Gao Wenjie's identity was fake and repatriated him back to China in March 1943. Gao Wenjie was arrested in Kunming on 5 March 1943, see AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang Chen Mengzhaoan, 2 March 1943. Although Wang Li-an's identity and assignment in India were identified by the ADCYP, Chiang Kai-shek ordered a more detailed investigation of his activities in India. It was not until September 1943 that Wang Li-an was repatriated to Kunming, see AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyinduqiaoshang Chen Mengzhaoan, 8 September 1943.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 6 January 1942.

⁷⁶ NAI, Home Political, E_1943_NA_F-32KW, 'Summary of suspicious activities of Jewish traders in Bombay'.

⁷⁷ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-3-25, from H. T. Sorley to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, 25 July 1944.

only exempted from most regular customs checks but also enjoyed extraterritoriality.⁷⁸ Even when customs found these foreign officers were engaging in smuggling, the local Indian authorities had no right to prosecute them but only to inform their governments. As a result, it was not only the Chinese and American officers who were exploiting the loophole to make profits, a lot of Chinese traders disguised themselves as army officers by wearing uniforms and presenting fake documents.

With no other means to establish the real identity of the Chinese, Indian customs tightened their check over all Chinese passengers. More often than not, Chinese army officers who were supposed to be exempted from customs checks were forced to present their luggage to the customs officials for inspection.⁷⁹ To respond to the tightened inspection, the chief inspector of the Military Affairs Commission of the Nationalist government Li Xiaobai visited Calcutta in May 1944 and had a talk with the Chinese Consul-General Bao Junjian. The two agreed that the Indian customs' targeting of Chinese passengers, and Chinese officers in particular, was definitely a violation of the Anglo-Chinese agreement of mutual exemption. Nevertheless, they also admitted that it was the rampant Chinese smuggling that pushed the Government of India to tighten its checks.⁸⁰ The increasing number of newly discovered smuggling cases that involved Chinese army officers and imposters not only weakened the Chinese authorities' bargaining power in asking for privileges for its officers in India but also damaged the image and reputation of the Chinese nation. This was of concern to Chiang Kai-shek, who desperately wanted to present China as a great, civilized, and responsible power to the Allies.⁸¹

To save the face of the Chinese nation, Li Xiaobai and Bao Junjian found that it was necessary to inspect all Chinese army officers by assigning Chinese law enforcement staff before they went through the Indian customs check in the airport. In so doing, smugglers would be deterred, and

⁷⁸ 'Hump Smuggling Ring Exposed by Army', *Roundup*, 21 December 1944.

⁷⁹ AH, 020-011903-0003, Waijiaobu, Wozaijiashelihangjiansuo yujianhuiguojunmin, 29 May 1944.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 19 May 1944.

⁸¹ Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist ideas have largely been summarized in his book, *China's Destiny*, in which he asserted that one of the most important tasks of China's nationalist revolution was to end the unequal treaties and rebuild China into a great modern power, see Chiang Kai-shek, *China's Destiny* (Westport: Praeger Publisher, 1985).

the British would no longer be able to embarrass the Chinese authorities by disclosing the smuggling cases that involved Chinese army officers.⁸²

In late May 1944, the Government of Bengal received a proposal from the Chinese Consulate in Calcutta to set up a Chinese checkpoint outside the Calcutta airport. The checkpoint would be staffed by a group of Chinese military police (numbered around 20) dispatched from the Chinese Expeditionary Force and directed by the Chinese Consul-General. All Chinese army officers who were about to leave Calcutta by air needed to come to the checkpoint to inspect identity documents and luggage by the Chinese military police first. If the checkpoint found any contraband, they would be forwarded to Indian customs, while the smugglers would be prosecuted by the Chinese authorities.⁸³

The Government of Bengal, the Calcutta police, and the Calcutta customs all found the Chinese proposal acceptable on the grounds that the checkpoint would not only address the India-China smuggling that troubled them for years but also save the cost of the customs inspection.⁸⁴ The Government of India, however, declined the Chinese proposal with the justification that a Chinese-run checkpoint in Calcutta was a violation of the Indian sovereignty. Checking smuggling, in the eyes of the British policymakers in New Delhi and London, was much less important in comparison with containing the Chinese expansion in India.

In fact, the Government of India and the British authorities behind it had long been concerned with the growing Chinese influence.⁸⁵ The existence of Chinese troops in Ramgarh was regarded by Lord Linlithgow as a potential threat to India's security, especially when Chiang Kai-shek repeatedly voiced his support for the Indian nationalist movement.⁸⁶ In

⁸² AH, 020-011903-0003, Waijiaobu, Wozaijiashelihangjiansuo yujianhuiguojunmin, 19 May 1944

⁸³ Ibid., 26 May 1944

⁸⁴ Ibid., 24 June 1944

⁸⁵ Assuming that the Chinese Nationalist government was systematically gathering information about India to interfere in India's internal politics, the British authorities set up the Chinese Intelligence Wing (under the direction of the Government of India in New Delhi) and the Chinese Intelligence Section (under the law of the Special Operation Executive in London) to address covert Chinese activities in India, see Richard Aldrich, 'Britain's Secret Intelligence Service in Asia during the Second World War', *Modern Asian Studies* 32:1 (1998): 179–217; Christopher Murphy, '“Constituting a Problem in Themselves”: Countering Covert Chinese Activity in India: The Life and Death of the Chinese Intelligence Section, 1944–46', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 44:6 (2016): 928–951.

⁸⁶ BL, IOR: L/PS/12/2320, from Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, 12 October 1942.

addition to the Chinese military presence, a growing number of Chinese refugees, traders, sailors, and adventurers had settled down in India for wartime opportunities. From 1942 to 1944, the registered Chinese population in India increased from 14,930 to 24,820.⁸⁷ As the Chinese developed and expanded their communities in Chinatowns in Bombay, Calcutta, and Assam, Chinese schools, temples, clan associations, and commercial organizations prospered. Almost all of these institutions were administered by the Chinese and subject to instructions from the Chinese authorities.

The self-ruled Chinese communities in India were of great concern to the British authorities. The Intelligence Bureau of the Home Department of the Government of India warned in a memorandum that the expansion of the Chinese communities in India would give the Chinese Nationalist government more excuses to intervene in India's internal affairs. It explained that one of the main aims of the Nationalist government was to gain a certain kind of extraterritoriality for its nationals in India by supporting the establishment of Chinese enclaves, which were then administered by the Kuomintang party machinery directed from China while giving little more than a nominal homage to India's legal system.⁸⁸

Setting up a Chinese-administered checkpoint in the airport of Calcutta was seen by the Government of India as more evidence of the Chinese conspiracy to increase its own influence in India. While the Government of India had been losing its battle against smuggling and the checkpoint was supposed to be helpful in figuring out the identity of Chinese army officers, the British authorities prioritized its grand policy of containing the Chinese expansion in India against the relatively minor issue of addressing the India-China smuggling and rejected the proposal.

As the Second World War was coming to an end and the Chinese problem in India was becoming urgent, the Government of India made a decision to reject almost all applications for the extension of visas for the Chinese in India.⁸⁹ Chinese army officers intending to visit India

⁸⁷ NAI, Home Political, E_1945_NA_F-16-49, from Mr. Lovatt to J. R. de Chazal, 23 March 1945.

⁸⁸ NAI, Home Political, E_1945_NA_F-16-49, 'Extracts of Notes from Home Department File No. 16/123/44-Poll. (EW), regarding grant of a visa for India to Mr. Chu Hung-Li, a Chinese national'; 30 January 1945.

⁸⁹ NAI, Home Political, E_1945_NA_F-16-49, from A. Napier, Indian Agency-General, Chungking to External Affairs Department, New Delhi, 14 June 1945.

found that their applications for visa were either ignored or rejected.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the Government of India began to use 'smuggling' as the justification to expel Chinese immigrants and officials in India. The leader of the Chinese community in Assam, He Manyuan, and the general secretary of Kuomintang's Indian branch, Liu Yiling, were both expelled from India on the charge of taking part in smuggling.⁹¹ The crackdown did not stop the India-China smuggling as civilian smugglers continued their cross-boundary trade well into the 1950s. Still, it did mark the end of the golden age of the Chinese immigration in to India.

Conclusion

After being arrested by the Indian police on 5 January 1943, Chen Mengzhao was then transferred to the Chinese Consulate in Calcutta. On the morning of 8 January, Chinese military police brought Chen Mengzhao back to Chongqing for prosecution.⁹² Although Chen Mengzhao argued that he played only a relatively minor role in the smuggling gang, Chiang Kai-shek gave the order to execute Chen Mengzhao and Ge Zunxian in October 1943.⁹³ The execution of Chen Mengzhao and Ge Zunxian was widely reported in contemporary Chinese newspapers, which highlighted that their crimes not only interrupted the national economy but seriously undermined the prestige of the Chinese nation.⁹⁴

To sentence smugglers to death was not uncommon in wartime China. In December 1942, the chief inspector of the Kunming custom

⁹⁰ NAI, Home Political, E_1945_NA_F-16-49, from A. Napier to H. E. Richardson, 7 April 1945.

⁹¹ For the case of He Manyuan, see AH, 020-011908-0010, Waijiaobu, Yinduyasansheng magangqiaoling hemanyuanan, 13 December 1944. For the case of Liu Yiling, see AH, 020-011908-0001, Waijiaobu, Liuyilingbeiyindupoling lijingdeng, 3 November 1947.

⁹² AH, 020-011904-0021, Waijiaobu, Lvyindugiaoshang Chen Mengzhaoan, 9 January 1943.

⁹³ Ibid., 1 November 1943.

⁹⁴ 'Chen Mengzhao Ge Zunxian zousihuoli gechusixing' (Chen Mengzhao and Ge Zunxian were sentenced to death due to smuggling), *Zhongyangribao*, 20 October 1943; 'Kongzhongzousi' (Smuggling by air), *Xijingribao*, 20 October 1943; 'Toushuizousizhesi: Chen Mengzhao deng fufa' (The smugglers should be executed: The death penalty of Chen Mengzhao and others), *Zhongyangribao*, 20 October 1943; 'Toulouguanshui zousimouli, Chen Mengzhao Ge Zunxian beichusixing' (To obtaining profit by smuggling: Chen Mengzhao and Ge Zunxian were executed), *Saodangbao*, 20 October 1943.

was sentenced to death after he was found guilty of taking bribes from smugglers and taking part in smuggling.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the death penalty mainly was reserved for army officers and civil servants. In fact, as an ordinary civilian trader, Chen Mengzhao's death penalty punishment was not due to his smuggling activities but the damage his smuggling brought to China's national reputation.⁹⁶

Since Kuomintang seized power in China and began the Nationalist rule in the 1920s, the Nationalist government had tried hard to strengthen its legitimacy by resorting to nationalist and anti-imperial policies and discourses. The legitimacy of the Nationalist rule was then directly linked to whether the Nationalist government could end the century-long national humiliation and lead the Chinese nation back to the rank of great powers.⁹⁷ The outbreak of the Pacific War gave the Nationalist government a golden opportunity to uplift its international status as the Allies needed China to stay in the war as a deterrent to the Japanese. The peak of the Nationalist government's effort to raise its international status came with the British and American authorities agreeing to end their extraterritorial rights in China in early 1943 and Chiang Kai-shek's attendance at the Cairo Conference as the leader of one of the great powers.⁹⁸

At this moment when the Nationalist government was most sensitive about its image, Chen Mengzhao's India-China smuggling enterprise

⁹⁵ 'Qiankunmingjianchazhangzhang Zhujiyishouhuichusi' (Ex-chief inspector of the Kunming custom, Zhu Jiye was sentenced to death), *Zhongyangribao*, 30 December 1942.

⁹⁶ While addressing the smuggling problem, Chiang Kai-shek instructed that once any army officers and government officials were found guilty, they should be executed at once. Civilian merchants and traders involved in the smuggling should be prosecuted by the court according to the law, see AH, 020-011904-0021, Wajiaobu, Lvyingduqiaoshang Chen Mengzhaoan, 12 December 1942.

⁹⁷ Edmund Fung, 'The Chinese Nationalism and the Unequal Treaties, 1924–1931', *Modern Asian Studies* 21:4 (1987): 793–819; Bickers, *Britain in China*; Dong Wang, *China's Unequal Treaties: Narrating National History* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2005). Anne Reinhardt argues that even local warlords in modern China harbored their own anti-imperialist agenda and took actions to try to end the foreign privileges, see Anne Reinhardt, 'Decolonisation' on the Periphery: Liu Xiang and Shipping Rights Recovery at Chongqing, 1926–38', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36:2 (2008): 259–274. The national humiliation at the hands of Western powers became a powerful discourse for nationalists to initiate their state-building project across Asia, see Shane Strate, *The Lost Territories: Thailand's History of National Humiliation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015).

⁹⁸ Wesley Fishel, *The End of Extraterritoriality in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952); Stephen Halsey, *Quest for Power: European Imperialism and the Making of Chinese Statecraft* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Rana Mitter, *China's Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

and his collaboration with American pilots were exposed. The fact that Chinese merchants were running smuggling gangs in the Allied territories and bribing Allied pilots for illegal conduct was in sharp contrast to the image the Nationalist government was desperately trying to build, which was supposed to be that of a responsible and civilized great power. In this context, both Chen Mengzhao's execution and the ensuing proposal to establish a checkpoint in the Calcutta airport were actually not aimed at combating the rampant India-China smuggling but to save the face of the Chinese authorities. The move of the Chinese authorities to check the Chinese smuggling in India was seen by the British authorities as a Chinese conspiracy to encroach upon India's sovereignty and establish a Chinese population in India. As a response, the British authorities not only rejected the Chinese proposal of setting up the checkpoint but also tried to design policies to put an end to the diaspora moment of the Chinese in India.

In summary, this chapter provides an alternative perspective to understand the interplay between state and smuggling in modern India and China. It argues that the state was not always standing on the opposite side of smuggling. Sometimes, state policies facilitated smuggling. And even when the state decided to crackdown on smuggling, it might not be because of the economic damage the illegal trade caused but due to the concern for international reputation or state security.

While Gao Wenjie was trying to find means to evade the custom check for his smuggling, he learned that some deserters from the Chinese Expeditionary Force were running a business of making fake identity documents in Bowbazar's Chinatown. Through the hands of these Chinese deserters, Gao Wenjie successfully obtained documents with fake Chinese army stamps that stated that he was an army officer. In the next chapter, I will explore the experiences of the Chinese deserters in India. As the first two chapters of this book have already mentioned, after the fall of Burma, the Chinese Expeditionary Force was sent to India to receive American training. Many soldiers of the CEF, however, chose to desert their unit and started new lives in India's Chinatowns. These deserters, similar to the smugglers in this chapter, developed their own strategies in evading the check and surveillance of the state and engendered different reactions from the Chinese and British authorities.

4

Deserters

In the last two chapters, I have told little-known stories of the Chinese sailors and smugglers in India during the Second World War. In these stories, no matter when the Chinese authorities in Calcutta met challenges or intended to implement certain policies, they would ask the Chinese Expeditionary Force (CEF) to send its soldiers for support. It seems that the CEF was the cornerstone of the Chinese existence in war-time India. As this chapter will show, however, the large-scale desertion of the Chinese soldiers in India made the CEF also the source of the challenges facing the Chinese Nationalist government and a significant concern to the British colonial authorities. As the Nationalist government tried to find ways to control the desertion and to prevent the deserters from merging with already troublesome Chinese sailors and smugglers, the Government of India came to worry that the Chinese deserters not only caused social problems to the Indian society but also worked as intelligence agents for the Chinese government to infringe the Indian sovereignty. Although the Chinese and British authorities decided to work together to address the crisis, the British suspicions of the intentions of the Nationalist government substantially weakened the collaborative effort. The deserters, in their turn, found different ways to evade the hunt of the Chinese and British authorities. Overall, the experiences of the Chinese deserters push us to rethink the Chinese national narratives of the CEF.

Rescuing the CEF from National History

For readers, and the Chinese readers in particular, the episode of the CEF in India during the War of Resistance¹ is a familiar story. In the recent

¹ The War of Resistance, also known as the Second Sino-Japanese War, is a military conflict between China and Japan from 1937 (1931 in some versions of history) to 1945. After the

decade, a large number of literary works, TV series, and documentaries have been produced that feature the CEF.² The broad reception of these literary and media productions among Chinese audiences and readers indicates a growing interest in the experiences of the Chinese soldiers in exotic lands during the war. Most of the productions, however, follow a linear narrative framework in which the CEF was firstly defeated by the Japanese in Burma, suffered heavily in retreat, recovered and strengthened under the support of the Americans in India, and overwhelmed the Japanese in the end. Instead of retrieving and reconstructing the Chinese experience in wartime Burma and India, this genre of the narrative highlights the sacrifice, suffering, bravery, and patriotism of the CEF soldiers and commanders in exotic lands.³ By glorifying and romanticizing the story of the CEF, these popular works have echoed the ever-rising Chinese nationalism since the 1990s.⁴

The popularity of the stories of the CEF in mass media and among the public, however, is in contrast to the marginalized status of the studies of the CEF in the scholarship of the Second World War.⁵ Even in China,

outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, the War of Resistance merged with other conflicts of the Second World War.

² A brief search of the website of the National Library China indicated that more than 100 literary works related to the CEF have been published in Chinese since 1990. *Zhongguo yuanzhengjun* (The Chinese Expeditionary Force), a 56-episode TV series released in 2012, and *Wode tuanzhang wodetuan* (My Chief and My Regiment), a 43-episode TV series released in 2009, are all well-received among the Chinese audience. Additionally, the Chinese state television broadcaster CCTV released a 12-episode documentary *Zhongguo yuanzhengjun* (The Chinese Expeditionary Force) in 2010 and further raised the public's interest in the history of the CEF.

³ Chen Taoxia, 'Lunkangzhanshiyexia de zhongguo yuanzhengjun shuxie' (The Narrative of the CEF from the Perspective of the War of Resistance), *Journal of Henan Normal University* (Philosophy and Social Sciences) 6 (2014): 157–160; Li Zhifei, 'Lishide jiyi yu beizhuang de xushu' (Historical Memory and Solemn and Stirring Narrative: the Literary Writing on Chinese Expeditionary Force), *Journal of Chongqing Normal University* (Philosophy and Social Sciences) 6 (2012): 44–49.

⁴ For the links between memory of the War of Resistance and contemporary Chinese nationalism, see James Reilly, 'Remember History, Not Hatred: Collective Remembrance of China's War of Resistance to Japan', *Modern Asian Studies* 45:2 (2011): 463–490; Rana Mitter and Aaron William Moore, 'China in World War II, 1937–1945: Experience, Memory, and Legacy', *Modern Asian Studies* 45:2 (2011): 225–240; Parks Coble, 'China's "New Remembering" of the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937–1945', *The China Quarterly* 190:June (2007): 394–410; Rana Mitter, 'Behind the Scenes at the Museum: Nationalism, History and Memory in the Beijing War of Resistance Museum, 1987–1997', *The China Quarterly* 161:March (2000): 279–293.

⁵ For a long time, studies of the Second World War focused on the European Theatre, while the theatres in the Pacific and Asia have often been regarded as secondary importance. Scholars working on the China-India-Burma Theatre, which has been taken as the margin of the Pacific War, get used to paying their attention to the American and British military campaigns.

researchers of the War of Resistance have not paid adequate attention to the wartime experience of the Chinese in Burma and India. Nevertheless, the lack of scholarly attention, and archival research in particular, leads to the misunderstanding, if not mythicization, of the history of the CEF.

Since the 1990s, scholars across the world have begun to look beyond the nationalist discourse to examine other aspects of the War of Resistance, which have long been muted or suppressed because they were deemed unfit for nationalist agendas. In other words, the War of Resistance is not merely about enemy atrocities, civilian suffering and persistence in hard times, and soldiers' heroic sacrifice, but also about other ways of responding to the war such as desertion, collaboration, and smuggling.⁶ In his study of the Chinese collaboration with the Japanese in local towns on the Yangtze Delta, Timothy Brook contends that collaboration with the Japanese was a common practice among local elites and officials to ensure social reproduction and to maintain their own power.⁷ Although the national history in neither mainland China nor Taiwan

In contrast, the CEF, one of the most vital forces in this theatre, has often been left behind. For the critique of the understudy of the CBI Theatre, see Berenice Guyot-Rechard, 'When Legions Thunder Past: The Second World War and India's Northeastern Frontier', *War in History* 23:3 (2018): 328–360; Unknown Author, 'Beiyiwang de zhongmianyin zhanqu' (The Forgotten CBI Theatre), *Wenhui bao*, 6 June 2016. For the extensive literature of the CBI Theatre, see Jon Latimer, *Burma: The Forgotten War* (London: John Murray Pubs Ltd, 2005); Donovan Webster, *The Burma Road: The Epic Story of the China-Burma-India Theatre in World War II* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004); Daniel Marston, *Phoenix from the Ashes: The Indian Army in the Burma Campaign* (Westport: Praeger, 2002); Louis Allen, *Burma: The Longest War 1941–45* (London: Cassel, 2000); William Slim, *Defeat into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942–1945* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000); Eugene Rasor, *The China-Burma-India Campaign, 1931–1945: Historiography and Annotated Bibliography* (Westport: Greenwood, 1998); Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *United States Army in World War II, China-Burma-India Theater: Stilwell's Command Problems* (Washington, D. C.: Center of Military History, 1956).

⁶ Nicole Barnes, *Intimate Communities: Wartime Healthcare and the Birth of Modern China, 1937–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018); Thai, *China's War on Smuggling*; Gong Xilin, 'Kangzhan shiqi guominzhengfu zhengbing guochenzhong nongminde shengcun yu fankang' (The Survival and Resistance of Peasants against the Conscription of the Nationalist Government during the War of Resistance), *Lishijiaoxue* 22 (2012): 48–55; Wang Dongmei, 'Kangzhan shiqi guomindang bingyifubai de yuanyintanxi' (Exploring the Reason of the Corruption of the Conscription of the Nationalist Government during the War of Resistance), *Wenhua bolan (lilun)* 10 (2010): 10–12; Parks, *Chinese Capitalists in Japan's New Order*; David Barret and Larry Shyu eds., *Chinese Collaboration with Japan, 1932–45: The Limits of Accommodation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Poshek Fu, *Resistance, Passivity, and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai, 1937–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

⁷ Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

includes these collaborators, or simply tags them as traitors, looking at this from below could help us better understand, and sometimes even empathize with, the motivations, contexts, and conditions of individual choices.

In fact, the study of the CEF does not suffer from a lack of primary sources from below. Memoirs by and interviews with CEF veterans are not uncommon. Through them we come to know the CEF soldiers' astonishment at modern American equipment, their hard training days in the Ramgarh Training Center, and their courageous fighting against the Japanese in the Burmese jungles.⁸ These works, however, only present the victorious side of the history. At the same time, the alternative ways of responding to the war, such as desertion, have never been given a voice. Worse still, instead of being employed in scholarly analysis, most of the memoirs and interviews have been used to substitute, justify, and strengthen the nationalist rhetoric in the narratives of the CEF.

One way to rescue the study of the CEF from the predominance of national historiography is to contextualize the experience of the CEF against the socio-political backdrop of the British Raj in the 1940s. For a long time, our understanding of the CEF has been limited to the conflicts between the Chinese and American politicians over the command of the CEF, the responsibilities for the failure of the CEF in Burma, and the CEF soldiers who were trained and equipped by the Americans. The impact of such a large number of Chinese soldiers on local Indian society and the interactions between the Chinese soldiers, the British authorities, and indigenous Indian civilians have rarely been discussed.

⁸ Zhang Wenzhi, 'Zhandijizhe bixiade zhongguoyuanzhengjun' (The CEF recoded by battlefield journalist), *Yunnan dangkan* 1 (2016): 29–33; Zhou Yu, 'Zhongguo yuanzhengjun zhongwei yiguan Zhang Tongyou xunfanglu' (An interview of the CEF Sergeant Zhang Tongyou), *Guiyang wenshi* 1 (2015): 51–54; Bai Se, 'Zhongguoyuanzhengjun zaiyindujixun' (The training of the CEF in India), *Wenxue xuankan* 11 (2013): 53–56; Zhu Ming, 'Zhongguoyuanzhengjun laobing liangjiayou' (The Veteran of the CEF Liang Jiaoyou), *Dangan jianshe* 7 (2014): 51–53; Ray Huang, *Mianbeizhizhan* (The Battle in Northern Burma) (Beijing: Xinxing chubanshe, 2007); Wu Youchun, 'Zhongguoyuanzhengjun laobinglcaifangshouji Shang' (Interviews of Veterans of the CEF Part I), *Shijie bolan* 9 (2005): 10–13; Wu Youchun, 'Zhongguoyuanzhengjun laobinglcaifangshouji Shang Xia' (Interviews of Veterans of the CEF Part II), *Shijie bolan* 10 (2005): 10–13; Ge Qi, 'wozai zhongguoyuanzhengjun de rizi' (My experience in the CEF), *Jianghai qiaoshen* 11 (1995): 44–50; Li Shoutong, 'Zhongguoyuanzhengjun zhuyinshenghuojianwen' (Daily observation of the CEF in India), *Jianghuai wenshi* 2 (1993): 68–76.

In recent years, India's role in the Second World War has drawn increasing attention from historians. The contribution of Indian soldiers to the war in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, as well as the anti-British campaigns of the Indian National Army in Southeast Asia have been unfolded and explored in detail.⁹ Furthermore, practitioners also try to examine how India itself was reshaped by the war and how the global war impacted on India's local societies and political landscape.¹⁰ Yasmin Khan notices that the arrival of foreign refugees, technicians, sailors, and servicemen in India during the Second World War brought about both opportunities for and challenges to local Indian societies. While the coming of foreign sailors and soldiers boosted local business in big cities such as Bombay, Calcutta, and Karachi, the existence of a large number of European refugees also shattered the myth of white supremacy in India.¹¹ Among these foreign elements in wartime India, the Chinese were the most numerous. At its peak, more than 60,000 Chinese servicemen, 5,000 Chinese sailors, and some 30,000 Chinese refugees from Hong Kong, Malaya, and Burma flocked to India. They were mixed with Chinese Indians living in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. Although

⁹ Ravi Inder Singh Sidhu, *As Told by Them: Personal Narratives of Indian Soldiers who Fought during World War II* (New Delhi: Quills Ink Publishing, 2014); Kaushik Roy ed., *The Indian Army in the Two World Wars* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Sugata Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle Against Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011); Kaushik Roy, 'Expansion and Deployment of the Indian Army during World War II: 1939–45', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 88:355 (2010): 248–268; C. A. Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941–1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2004); Chandar Sundaram, 'A Paper Tiger: The Indian National Army in Battle, 1944–45', *War & Society* 13:1 (1995): 42–47; Peter Ward Fay, *The Forgotten Army: India's Armed Struggle for Independence, 1942–1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

¹⁰ Yasmin Khan, *The Raj at War: A People's History of India's Second World War* (London: Vintage, 2016); Srinath Raghavan, *India's War: World War II and the Making of Modern South Asia* (New York: Basic Books, 2016); Janam Mukherjee, *Hungry Bengal: War, Famine, Riots and the End of Empire* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2015); Madusree Mukerjee, *Churchill's Secret War: The British Empire and the Ravaging of India During World War II* (New Delhi: Tranquebar, 2010); Auriol Weigold, *Churchill, Roosevelt and India: Propaganda during World War II* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009); Sri Manjari, *Through War and Famine: Bengal 1939–45* (New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2009); Kenton Clymer, *Quest for Freedom: The United States and India's Independence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Indivar Kamtekar, 'A Different War Dance: State and Class in India 1939–1945', *Past & Present* 176:Aug. (2002): 187–221; Bishwa Mohan Prasad, *Second World War and Indian Industry 1939–45: A Case Study of the Coal Industry in Bengal and Bihar* (New Delhi: Anamika Prakashan, 1992); Arun Chandra Bhuyan, *The Quit India Movement: The Second World War and Indian Nationalism* (Guwahati: Lawyer's Book Stall, 1993); Gary Hess, *America Encounters India, 1941–1947* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).

¹¹ Yasmin Khan, *The Raj at War: A People's History of India's Second World War* (London: Vintage, 2016).

both the scale and intensity of the interactions between the Chinese and Indians during the Second World War were unprecedented, most studies merely focus on elite-level exchanges such as the Indian Medical Mission to China in 1938, Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to China in 1939, Chiang Kai-shek's trip to India and his talks with Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, and the dispute between the British, Americans, and Chinese over the command of the Burma Campaign.¹²

Overall, the lack of the bottom-up perspective not only limits our complete understanding of the Chinese experience in wartime India but also compromises a more inclusive investigation into India's involvement in the Second World War. Recently, efforts have been made to challenge the hegemony of national historiography that takes modern China and India as separate and exclusive objects.¹³ Inspired by this development, this chapter takes the story of Chen Ching Lin (Chen Jinglian), a CEF deserter in India, as an example to present how the bottom-up perspective is capable of interweaving modern Indian and Chinese histories into an integrated framework. In so doing, it tries to reconstruct a shared past of India and China in the 1940s from below and to make sense of how ordinary individuals made their own choices in a global war.

¹² Maria Framke, "We Must Send a Gift Worthy of India and the Congress!" War and Political Humanitarianism in Late Colonial South Asia, *Modern Asian Studies* 51:6 (2017): 1969–1998; Yang Tianshi, 'Chiang Kai-shek and Jawaharlal Nehru', in Hans van de ven, Diana Larry, and Stephen MacKinnon eds., *Negotiating China's Destiny in World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 127–140; B. R. Deepak, 'India's Political Leaders and Nationalist China: Quest for a Sino-Indian Alliance', *China Report* 50:3 (2014): 218–220; Guido Samarani, *Shaping the Future of Asia: Chiang Kai-shek, Nehru and China-India Relations during the Second World War Period* (Lund: Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, 2005); A. M. Saklani, 'Nehru, Chiang Kai-shek, and the Second World War', in Madhavi Thampi ed., *India and China in the Colonial World* (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2005), 168–175; Lin Hsiao-ting, 'Erzhanshiqi zhongyingguanxi zaitantao: yinanya wei zhongxin' (Reconsidering Sino-British Relations during World War II: Centered on the South Asia Problem), *Jindaishiyuanjiu* 4 (2005): 32–56; Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China* (Washington D. C.: Government Publishing Office, 1953).

¹³ Peter van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Tansen Sen, *India, China, and the World: A Connected History*; Prasenjit Duara and Elizabeth Perry eds., *Beyond Regimes: China and India Compared* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Yin Cao, *From Policemen to Revolutionaries: A Sikh Diaspora in Global Shanghai* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

Bringing Chinese Soldiers to Ramgarh

In early 1942, the Japanese invaded Burma. To defend the Burma Road, which was then the main supply line for the Chinese Nationalist government, the CEF, composed of the Chinese 5th Army, the Chinese 6th Army, and the Chinese 66th Army, entered Burma in March 1942. Chen Ching Lin was part of the army medical store of the Chinese 5th Army at that time.¹⁴ Due to the lack of coordination and communication between the Allied forces, the defensive line of the Allies in Burma collapsed by the end of April 1942.

Although the retreat of the CEF turned out to be a disaster as thousands of Chinese soldiers died in the jungles of northern Burma, Chen Ching Lin and his unit returned to Yunnan safely. Some units of the CEF, however, did not retreat back to China. The New 38th Division of the 66th Army led by General Sun Liren entered India in May 1942, with the explanation that their original retreat route was cut off by the Japanese.¹⁵

The arrival of the Chinese soldiers in India drew the attention of the Americans. The American commander of the Allies' China-Burma-India (CBI) Theatre, Joseph Stilwell, harboured a plan to train a large number of Chinese servicemen in India. By providing systematic training and equipping them with sophisticated weapons, Stilwell believed that the Chinese units would be essential in the reconquest of Burma.¹⁶ On the Chinese side, Chiang Kai-shek also wanted to utilize American resources to modernize his troops.¹⁷ Though the British were reluctant to let the Chinese troops stay in India, they agreed to provide accommodation for them under pressure from the Americans, with the promise that the Americans would provide most of the supplies to the Chinese.¹⁸

In June 1942, Ramgarh, a small town in northeast India (within today's Jharkhand State in the Republic of India) that was then a camp for

¹⁴ AH, 020-011903-0016, Waijiaobu, Soubu zhuyindu guojun taobing 2, 17 October 1946.

¹⁵ In a letter Sun Liren wrote to Chiang Kai-shek, he explained that his defiance of orders and retreat into India was because his retreat route was blocked by the Japanese, see AH, 002-020300-00020-054, Jiangzhongzheng zongtongwenwu, Yuanzhengjunrumian 2, 22 May 1942.

¹⁶ AH, 002-020300-00024-011, Jiangzhongzhengzongtongwenwu, Shidiweijiangjun jiuuzhi, 15 June 1942.

¹⁷ AH, 002-020300-00024-006, Jiangzhongzhengzongtongwenwu, Shidiweijiangjun jiuuzhi, 6 May 1942.

¹⁸ TNA, FO 371/35827, from B.A.S. Washington to War Office, 8 June 1943.

Prisoners of War, was selected by the Americans as the site for training the CEF.¹⁹ By early October 1942, around 10,000 Chinese soldiers were being trained by the Americans in Ramgarh.²⁰ Stilwell and Chiang Kai-shek, however, were not satisfied with the small scale of the training program. While Chiang Kai-shek wanted to have more Chinese troops trained and equipped, Stilwell had a pessimistic view of the China Theatre. Stilwell emphasized that if the Chinese Nationalist government in Chongqing collapsed, the Chinese troops in India would be the last available Chinese forces working with the Allies.²¹ Under pressure from Stilwell, the Chinese force at Ramgarh increased from 10,000 to 23,000 in January 1943, and up to 45,000 by May 1943.²² In May 1943, Stilwell furthered his ambitions and told the British Chiefs of Staff that he would like to increase the number of Chinese troops in Ramgarh to around 100,000.²³ This proposal, however, was strongly opposed by the British on military grounds. The British argued that the number of Chinese troops which could be deployed for the offensive into Burma was limited by the capacity of the Ledo Road from Assam. On the grounds that the capacity for the Ledo Road was 50,000 people, the additional Chinese troops in India could not be deployed to the Burma frontline.²⁴

In fact, the British objections were rooted in deep political concerns. Firstly, the British worried that having more Chinese troops in India would increase the pressure from the Chinese and the Americans on the military operations in the reconquest of Burma. And once Burma was reclaimed, the Chinese troops garrisoned there would give the Chinese government a greater voice in settlement of Burma's future. Secondly, the large number of Chinese soldiers in India would provide the Chinese substantial leverage in interfering in internal Indian politics. The British even raised the possibility that the Chinese troops would assist the Congress Party when serious civil disorder broke out in India.²⁵

¹⁹ NA, RG 493, UD-UP 8, Box 96, from T. H. Boss to Headquarters, Eastern Army, Ranchi, 28 June 1942.

²⁰ BL, IOR: L/ PS/ 12/2320, from Lt. Colonel, Allies Liaison Section to W. G. S. Thompson, 13 October 1942.

²¹ BL, IOR: L/ PS/ 12/2320, 'Meeting with General Stilwell', 31 May 1943.

²² BL, IOR: L/ PS/ 12/2320, from War Staff, India Office to D. M. O., War Office, 5 May 1943.

²³ BL, IOR: L/ PS/ 12/2320, from Chunking to Foreign Office, 29 September 1942.

²⁴ BL, IOR: L/ PS/ 12/2320, 'Move of Additional Chinese Troops to India', 23 June 1943.

²⁵ BL, IOR: L/ PS/ 12/2320, 'Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India', 26 June 1943.

Facing the strong objections of the British, Stilwell had to scale down his original plan. Finally, a compromise was reached that Stilwell was allowed to bring an additional 15,000 Chinese soldiers to Ramgarh, making the total number 57,000, or the maximum number the British said they could receive.²⁶

For the ordinary Chinese soldiers, being brought to India was a privilege. In Ramgarh, the Chinese were paid in Rupees, which were much more valuable than the hyperinflated Chinese currency.²⁷ Additionally, the food and living conditions in Ramgarh, which were all provided by the Americans to the same standard as the U.S. Army, were a lure for the Chinese soldiers. Enrolment in the army training in India, therefore, was very competitive.

After the retreat from Burma, the Chinese 5th Army, including Chen Ching Lin's unit, was quartered around Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan.²⁸ The morale of the army unit was extremely low as most army commanders were either absent from their positions or had no interest in maintaining discipline.²⁹ In early 1943, recruiting officers arrived in Kunming to recruit servicemen for the training program in Ramgarh. Large numbers of soldiers from the 5th Army deserted from their duties in order to apply for positions in Ramgarh by bribing recruiting officers.³⁰

Chen Ching Lin was one such deserter. Hiding the fact that he was serving in the medical store of the 5th Army, Chen Ching Lin applied for a position in the 20th General Hospital at Ramgarh.³¹ His application was successful. However, it was unclear whether he bribed the recruiting officer, as most of his fellow recruits did, or not. In June 1943, Chen Ching Lin was flown from Kunming to Ramgarh and began his work as the 1st Lieutenant managing the medical store in the 20th General Hospital.

²⁶ TNA, AIR 23/2222, from Air Ministry to Arminda, 2 August 1943.

²⁷ An ordinary Chinese soldier in India could get 15 to 30 Rupees each month, see Li Shoutong, 'Zhongguo yuanzhengjun zhuyinshenghuojianwen' (The daily life of the CEF in India), *Jianghuai Wenshi* 2 (1993): 75.

²⁸ A part of the 5th Army retreated to India in June 1942 and was then integrated into the New 1st Army under the American training in Ramgarh.

²⁹ TNA, WO 106/3547, 'Yunnan: Low Morale of the Chinese 5th Army', 1 December 1942.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from J. R. Chazal to Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, 19 June 1944.

Deserting Ramgarh

The relatively higher salary and better living conditions in India, however, failed to restore the morale of the Chinese soldiers and their commitment to the war effort. Instead of taking part in the intensive and demanding training and fighting against the Japanese in Burmese jungles and mountains, many CEF soldiers found that they could start a quite comfortable life in India by either finding jobs in the local area or carrying out unlawful activities such as smuggling and gambling in Chinese settlements in Bombay and Calcutta. More importantly, the Chinese found that it was not very difficult to desert their duties and stay in India with whitewashed identities.

In early 1943, the British military observers in Ramgarh reported that most Chinese commanders of the CEF had no interest in maintaining discipline and checking desertion.³² Later correspondence between the commander of the CEF Chen Cheng and Chiang Kai-shek confirmed the British observation. Chen Cheng complained that many of his subordinate staff and officers encouraged desertion in their units in order to keep the salaries that were supposed to be given to the deserted soldiers.³³ Deserters could either walk away without notice or obtain signed documents from certain high-ranking officers or medics through bribes to make their leave more 'official'.

In June 1943, the British authorities in Calcutta conducted an investigation into three Chinese men who held civilian passports with no Indian visas. The British later found that these men were soldiers from the Ramgarh training centre. All of them produced certain documents issued by officers of their units that stated that they were given 'indefinite leave'. On submitting the documents to the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta, the three soldiers were issued civilian Chinese passports and recommendation letters to the Calcutta Civil Police, who accordingly gave them resident permits.³⁴ Nevertheless, while the British enquired

³² TNA, WO 106/4656, from M. A. Chungking to D. M. I., 14 June 1943.

³³ AH, 002-080200-00620-007, Jiangzhongzheng zongtongwenwu, Yibanziliao, 17 September 1943.

³⁴ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-42, from L. A. C. F. R. Y. to War Department, 24 February 1944; NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-42, from Chief, British Staff Mission, Ramgarh to Chief of the General Staff, New Delhi, 31 March 1943.

about the three soldiers with the Headquarters of the Chinese Army in Ramgarh, the Chinese authorities replied that they had neither discharged nor given 'indefinite leave' to any of their servicemen. In fact, the Chinese agreed with the British that the Chinese soldiers must be brought back to China before they were discharged.³⁵

It was clear to the British that the three Chinese under investigation were deserters who had produced unauthorized or fake identity documents.³⁶ Further investigation showed that at least 400 Chinese servicemen had deserted from Ramgarh by May 1943, most of whom possessed documents that stated that they were 'discharged' or on 'long leave'.³⁷

Deserters were also easily able to purchase different fake certificates in Calcutta. Yang Chien-ting, a sergeant from the 6th Motor Transport Regiment of the CEF based in Ramgarh, deserted to Calcutta in 1943. He set up a business in the office of the Chinese newspaper *India Daily* making and selling fake stamps and documents such as the stamps of the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta, registration certificates for Chinese nationals living in India, long leave certificates from the CEF, the discharge documents from the Chinese army, and medical certificates.³⁸ By presenting these fake certificates to the Chinese and British authorities, deserters could easily whitewash their identities and obtain an official residence permit in India.

On arrival in Ramgarh in June 1943, Chen Ching Lin found that desertion was common and that living as a civilian in India would be possible and more promising. He soon began to work out his own escape plan. Since he worked in a hospital, Chen Ching Lin had been acquainted with Major Ch. M. Lu, the medical officer of the 20th Hospital. By bribing Major Lu, Chen Ching Lin successfully secured a letter written in English and signed by Major Lu in November 1943. The letter stated that Chen Ching Lin was a First Lieutenant in the CEF and was discharged due to ill health. He was allowed to find a place in which to recover his health.³⁹

³⁵ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-42, from D. D. N. L. to War Department, 8 March 1944.

³⁶ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-42, from V. Shankar to E. A. D., 23 March 1944.

³⁷ TNA, WO 106/4656, from M. A., Chungking to DMI, 14 June 1943.

³⁸ AH, 020-011903-0015, Waijiaobu, Soubu zhuyindu guojun taobing 1, 16 October 1945.

³⁹ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from J. R. de Chazal to Mr. Shankar, Home Department, 19 June 1944.

With the letter in hand, Chen Ching Lin left Ramgarh for Bombay in November 1943. By that time, the Chinese community in Bombay was booming.⁴⁰ Since the breakout of the Pacific War, India had become the main home front for the Allies' war effort in China and Southeast Asia. As a result, Bombay became a significant transit port for military supplies. Large numbers of Chinese seamen who worked on Allied countries' cargo ships and liners stopped at Bombay. The Chinese in Bombay soon found lucrative business opportunities in providing services to these sailors: Chinese restaurants, hotels, and pawnshops sprang up.⁴¹

It is probable that Chen Ching Lin went to Bombay with the aim of finding a job there. On 13 November 1943, Chen Ching Lin arrived in Bombay by railway. On presenting the letter from the army to the Chinese Consul in Bombay, he was issued a Chinese civil passport and a registration certificate, Serial No. 16465. Although the Chinese Consul did not doubt his identity or conduct a further enquiry with the CEF headquarters in Ramgarh, they were reluctant to let Chen Ching Lin stay in Bombay on the grounds that they thought the local Chinese community was in a deep crisis at the time.⁴²

Among Bombay's booming service businesses catering to Chinese seamen, the most popular and profitable were gambling houses. By June 1943, there were 11 Chinese gambling houses in Bombay.⁴³ Since gambling was banned by the local government, these gambling houses had been disguised as clubs that provided entertainment for Chinese sailors. These clubs became so popular during the war that almost all Chinese sailors who stopped at Bombay went to these clubs.⁴⁴ Thus, the average monthly income of a club could reach up to 20,000 Rupees.⁴⁵ The tremendous income of the clubs boomed Bombay's Chinese community. They provided most of the funding for maintaining Chinese schools, clan

⁴⁰ The Chinese immigrated to Bombay in the 1850s. On the eve of the Pacific War, around 3,000 Chinese living in the city. Among them, more than half were from the Shandong province in Northern China and doing the clothing business. There were also Cantonese who were either carpenters or shoemakers. Additionally, around 100 Chinese from the Hubei Province worked in dental clinics in Bombay, see AH, 020-011908-0030, Waijiaobu, Mengmai huaqiaogaikuang, 12 February 1941.

⁴¹ AH, 020-011908-0019, Waijiaobu, Yindujingdu ji huaqiaokaisheduchangan, 9 June 1945.

⁴² NAI, Home_Political_E_1944_NA_F-88, from J. R. de Chazal to Mr. Shankar, Home Department, 19 June 1944.

⁴³ AH, 020-011908-0019, Waijiaobu, Yindujingdu ji huaqiaokaisheduchangan, 8 July 1943.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 30 September 1942.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 14 August 1944.

organizations (kongsi), and local charities. They were even responsible for the reception and accommodation of Chinese government officials who travelled to Bombay.⁴⁶

The thriving clubs in Bombay, however, also drew the attention of the Chinese authorities. Once the Chinese sailors landed in Bombay, they were taken in club-owned vehicles to the gambling houses. Quarrels, brawls, and fights broke out frequently in the clubs. To check the troublesome sailors, the clubs also employed dozens of local Indian gangsters as their guards. It was not uncommon to see the dead bodies of Chinese gamblers lying at the entrance of some of the clubs.⁴⁷ In addition to engaging in gambling, the clubs were also involved in opium smuggling between Ceylon and Bombay. Usually, opium dens were set up next to the gambling house in the clubs.⁴⁸

The activities of these clubs in Bombay were totally contradictory to the initiative of the Chinese authorities at that time. Since the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Chinese Nationalist government had been working hard to lift up the status of the Chinese nation in the world. By supporting the Indian nationalist movement, sending Chinese troops into Burma, and abolishing the extraterritoriality in China, Chiang Kai-shek aspired to showcase that China was an equal power to the United States and the British Empire. To that end, he felt the Chinese people should also be as civilized as the people in the West.⁴⁹ In this case, a disciplined overseas Chinese community could present the image of a resurgent Chinese nation that deserved an important place in the world, while the Chinese clubs in Bombay opposed this.

To address the problematic clubs, the Chinese Consul in Bombay issued a statement in September 1942 asking all clubs in Bombay to close down. The statement highlighted that the activities of the clubs were harmful to the reputation of the Chinese nation during a crucial moment when the international status of the nation was on the rise.⁵⁰ On the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 9 June 1945.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 9 April 1943.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14 August 1944.

⁴⁹ Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937–1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013); van de Ven, *China at War*.

⁵⁰ AH, 020-011908-0019, Waijiaobu, Yindujingdu ji huaqiaokaisheduchangan, 25 September 1942.

grounds that the warning failed to work and that more clubs were established, the Chinese Consul determined to take measures themselves.

The Chinese Consul in Bombay first reported all illegal activities committed by the clubs, such as organizing gambling, smuggling opium, and gang fighting to the local police, with the request that the local law enforcement should close down these clubs.⁵¹ Yet, no action was taken by the police. It later turned out that the clubs had bribed local Indian policemen with a sum of around 100,000 Rupees to not interfere with their business.⁵²

The Chinese consulate then made a direct appeal to Bombay's Commissioner of Police and asked him to arrest and repatriate the ring-leaders of the Chinese clubs in Bombay. The appeal, however, was declined by the British because the evidence was inadequate to prove that the clubs in question were used for gambling. Frustrated by the argument, the Chinese consulate suspected that the senior British officers were as corrupt as their Indian subordinates.⁵³ Unable to address the issue at the moment, the Chinese Consul discouraged Chinese nationals from coming to Bombay for fear that they would be influenced and corrupted by the gambling culture there and cause more trouble.⁵⁴

On 15 November 1943, two days after Chen Ching Lin arrived in Bombay, the Chinese Consul approached the Government of Bombay, seeking permission for Chen Ching Lin to proceed to Bangalore to recoup his health. The Chinese Consul even found Chen Ching Lin a job in Bangalore, working in a local Chinese restaurant.⁵⁵ The Government of Bombay, however, refused permission with the justification that all discharged Chinese military personnel should be repatriated back to China directly instead of staying in India. It further asked the Chinese Consul to give detailed procedures for Chen Ching Lin's repatriation to China. Nevertheless, no reply was received from the Chinese Consul until five months later.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Ibid., 30 September 1942.

⁵² Ibid., 7 April 1943.

⁵³ Ibid., 12 December 1943.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 6 December 1943.

⁵⁵ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from J. R. de Chazal to Mr. Shankar, Home Department, 19 June 1944.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

A Deserter or a Spy?

Failing to prompt the Bombay Police to close down the clubs and arrest the ringleaders of all the gambling organizations, the Chinese Consul worked hard to make alternative plans. The Chinese consulate announced in January 1944 that he could send criminals and gamblers to the CEF headquarters in Ramgarh using the Chinese Conscription Act. He believed that the British would have no reason to interfere if a Chinese conscription party was dispatched from Ramgarh to Bombay to enlist the Chinese nationals there. And by enlisting these troublesome elements into the army at Ramgarh, the Chinese authorities were able to send them back to China for trial.⁵⁷

Chen Ching Lin heard about this plan, and fearing that his identity might be uncovered when the military police arrived from Ramgarh, he brought forward his plan to leave India. In Bombay's clubs, he met Chinese sailors from across the world, heard many stories and gossip, and was presented with potential opportunities. Chen Ching Lin learnt from some sailors that jobs in America were very well-paid, and salaries were much higher than anywhere else in the world. He, therefore, made a plan in early 1944 to find a passenger ship that was destined for America and settle down there. Yet, Chen Ching Lin had to give up this plan since he had no way of obtaining a visa for boarding the liner.⁵⁸ Later, he heard that facilities for the Chinese seamen working onboard ships in Ceylon were the best available and that ship companies there did not request identity papers, Chen Ching Lin decided to go to Ceylon, transiting through Madras.⁵⁹

In February 1944, Chen Ching Lin informed the Chinese Consul in Bombay that he would like to move to Calcutta to seek treatment in the Presidency General Hospital. The Chinese Consul approved his application immediately without notifying the Government of Bombay. Chen Ching Lin left Bombay on 1 March 1944. His destination, however, was not Calcutta but Madras.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ AH, 020-011908-0019, Waijiaobu, Yindujingdu ji huaqiaokaisheduchangan, 15 January 1944.

⁵⁸ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from J. B. Brown to the Secretary to the Government of India, 28 July 1944.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from Deputy Commissioner of Police, Calcutta to the Joint Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 24 July 1944.

It was not until June 1944 that the Government of Bombay came back to the Chinese Consul to enquire into the case of Chen Ching Lin. The reply from the Chinese Consul frustrated the British. They learnt that the Chinese Consul did not do anything to investigate the procedure of his discharge from the Chinese army. Furthermore, the Chinese Consul claimed that it had already let Chen Ching Lin go to Calcutta in March. Further correspondence between the police departments in Bombay and Calcutta revealed that Chen Ching Lin had not arrived in Calcutta by April 1944.⁶¹ It was at this moment that the British began to review his case from the security point of view. The British suspected that Chen Ching Lin might be a Chinese spy who was deliberately discharged by the Chinese army to conduct something harmful⁶² to the British interest in India.⁶³

In fact, the British suspicion of a possible Chinese intervention in Indian affairs was deeply rooted in its concern for post-war geopolitics. In a secret telegraph dispatched to the Secretary of State for India in 1942, the Viceroy of India Lord Linlithgow warned that the Chinese had a strong interest in meddling in internal Indian politics in order to weaken the British influence in the region and that Chinese agents had probably been sent into India to antagonize Muslims and people living in the princely states.⁶⁴ Also in 1942, the British intended to employ some Chinese military police to check the growing number of Chinese refugees and sailors in India.⁶⁵ Although the Chinese authorities agreed to offer the help, it required that all Chinese officers dispatched to India should be allowed to communicate freely with their superior officers in China.⁶⁶ This precondition made the British uncomfortable and anxious on the grounds that they suspected the men the Chinese intended to send were all spies.⁶⁷ In

⁶¹ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from J. R. de Chazal to Mr. Shankar, Home Department, 19 June 1944.

⁶² The author of this telegraph did not indicate what kind of harmful thing Chen Ching Lin might cause. But it is very probable that the British intelligence office suspected Chen as a spy who could collect information about India and incite hatred among Indians against the British.

⁶³ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from J. R. de Chazal to Mr. Shankar, Home Department, 19 June 1944.

⁶⁴ BL, IOR: L/PS/12/2320, from Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, 12 October 1942.

⁶⁵ NAI, External Affairs, Progs., Nos. 520-X, 1942, from Seymour, Chungking to Foreign, New Delhi, 17 March 1942.

⁶⁶ NAI, External Affairs, Progs., Nos. 520-X, 1942, from Ambassador, Chungking to Foreign, New Delhi, 24 July 1942.

⁶⁷ NAI, External Affairs, Progs., Nos. 520-X, 1942, from Foreign, New Delhi to Ambassador, Chungking, 23 August 1942.

the end, the British gave up the proposal and employed British police officers who escaped from Hong Kong.⁶⁸ The case of Chen Ching Lin immediately alarmed the British. In July 1944, the Government of India issued a warrant to ask all provincial governments and chief commissioners of princely states across India to track down Chen Ching Lin.⁶⁹

Deserters and Chinatowns

Chen Ching Lin arrived in Madras on 4 April 1944, more than a month after leaving Bombay. Nevertheless, he could not board the ship heading for Colombo due to his lack of government documents. Being trapped in Madras and with no money in hand, he had to work in the Victory Chinese Café at Mount Road. Realizing that there would be no hope in the short term to board a ship for Ceylon from Madras, Chen Ching Lin decided to move up to Assam because he heard there were ample job opportunities in plantations there.⁷⁰ In early May 1944, Chen Ching Lin arrived in Calcutta, en-route to Assam. He decided to earn some money there before continuing his journey.

In the 1940s, Calcutta accommodated the largest overseas Chinese community in South Asia. The Chinese population in the city grew from around 5,000 on the eve of the Pacific War to more than 25,000 by the end of 1944.⁷¹ As Chinese refugees, merchants, deserters, and sailors flocked in, Chinese-run gambling houses, brothels, and opium dens sprang up. Most of these businesses were protected by Chinese deserters who usually had weapons and enjoyed judicial immunity. By the end of the Second World War, more than 1,000 Chinese deserters living in Calcutta alone.⁷² Some of the deserters even set up gangs to blackmail and extort Chinese-owned shops and factories in Calcutta. Kidnappings, killings, and gang battles were frequently seen in Calcutta's Chinatowns at that time.⁷³

⁶⁸ NAI, External Affairs, Progs., Nos. 520-X, 1942, from Seymour, Chungking to Foreign, New Delhi, 20 June 1942.

⁶⁹ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from Under Secretary to the Government of India to All Provincial Governments and Chief Commissioners, 4 July 1944.

⁷⁰ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from J. B. Brown to the Secretary to the Government of India, 28 July 1944.

⁷¹ AH, 020-011908-0008, Waijiaobu, Jiaergeda huaqiaogaikuang, 4 August 1941; NAI, Home Political, E_1945_NA_F-16-49, from J. R. de Chazal to Mr. Lovatt, 23 March 1945.

⁷² AH, 020-011903-0015, Waijiaobu, Soubu Zhuyinduguojuntaobing 1, 13 September 1945.

⁷³ AH, 020-011903-0015, Waijiaobu, Soubu Zhuyinduguojuntaobing 1, 26 April 1945.

Facing the deteriorating situation, however, the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta, like their counterpart in Bombay, was unable to find an immediate solution. Like Chen Ching Lin, most Chinese deserters in Calcutta possessed documents that stated that they were either on sick leave or long leave. Since the Calcutta Police could not verify the authenticity of these documents and they had no right to arrest any Chinese military personnel,⁷⁴ the deserters were able to act freely.⁷⁵ Even if the deserters were arrested in Calcutta, they were sent back to Ramgarh for prosecution. More often than not, the punishment for desertion was merely a short-term imprisonment.⁷⁶ Since the prison camp at Ramgarh was barely guarded, prisoners had been able to escape very easily.⁷⁷ Furthermore, there was no arrangement to repatriate these deserters back to China because there was no transportation available in Ramgarh.⁷⁸ Therefore, once they served their imprisonment term, they were free to return to Calcutta's Chinatowns.

There were two Chinatowns in Calcutta in the 1940s, one was in Bowbazar, and the residents there were mostly Cantonese; the other was in Tangra, where Hakka Chinese lived. When Chen Ching Lin arrived in Calcutta, however, he did not go to the Chinatowns to find work as most Chinese deserters did. Instead, he was employed in a Chinese restaurant at 10 Kyd Street, around 2 km south of Bowbazar. In fact, it was not difficult for deserters to find jobs in Calcutta as Chinese-run businesses in Calcutta were willing to employ Chinese deserters if they were not gang members.⁷⁹ On one hand, the deserters were able to speak Chinese and serve Chinese customers; on the other, salaries for the deserters were lower on the grounds that they had to hide their identities.⁸⁰ Chen Ching

⁷⁴ Chinese military personnel was exempted from registration and check by the Government of India under the Registration of Foreigners Act Ordinance 1942.

⁷⁵ AH, 020-011903-0015, Waijiaobu, Soubu Zhuyinduguojuntaobing 1, 8 April 1945.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 17 April 1945.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 17 May 1945.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 10 May 1945.

⁷⁹ According to Yu Xuxian, the number of Chinese restaurants in Calcutta grew dramatically during the Second World War, thanks to the influx of Chinese refugees, government officials, and merchants. By the end of the war, there were around 150 Chinese restaurants across the city, see Yu Xuxian ed., *Yindu xilan Huaqiao jingji* (The economy of the overseas Chinese in India and Ceylon) (Taipei: Haiwai chubanshe, 1956), 37. Such a large number of Chinese restaurants would definitely raise the demand for staff who were able to speak Mandarin.

⁸⁰ AH, 020-011903-0016, Waijiaobu, Soubu zhuyinduguojuntaobing 2, 26 June 1946.

Lin worked in the restaurant as a cashier for about a month and was discharged in June 1944.⁸¹ However, the British were still unable to track his whereabouts more than one year later.

While Chen Ching Lin was in Calcutta, both the Chinese and British authorities began to tighten their control of the Chinese community in the city for different reasons. By late 1944, the Pacific Club, a Chinese gang of some 30 members, had become the dominant force in Calcutta's Chinatowns. The leader of the Pacific Club, Chen Rugen, was a soldier of the CEF and had deserted Ramgarh more than once. In 1943, he disguised himself as a Chinese air force officer to cheat the local Chinese to go to Bombay. In 1944, he robbed a Chinese Indian in Assam and then fled to Calcutta. He organized a group of Chinese deserters and seamen in Calcutta, calling it the Pacific Club. With weapons such as pistols and grenades, gangsters of the Pacific Club extorted large amounts of money from Chinese-owned businesses. Those who dared to confront the gangsters were either robbed or killed.⁸² In April 1945, members of the Pacific Club even stole \$15,000 from Mei Youzhuo, who was the representative of the North American Chinese to the 6th National Congress of the KMT in Chongqing, in a hotel in Calcutta.⁸³

The case of Mei Youzhuo shocked the Nationalist government, as Chiang Kai-shek ordered the CEF and the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta to thoroughly investigate the case so as to exterminate all evil elements in Calcutta's Chinatowns. Because the CEF had either returned to China or entered Burma in 1945, the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta had no law enforcement personnel to carry out the action. As a result, the Chinese authorities asked the Calcutta Police to check the Chinese deserters, a move that compromised the judicial immunity for Chinese military personnel in India.⁸⁴

The British were all too ready to accept the Chinese proposal. In addition to suspecting that the Chinese were interfering with internal affairs in India, the British were convinced that the Chinese government harboured a systematic plan of establishing enclaves of extraterritoriality

⁸¹ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from Deputy Commissioner of Police to the Joint Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 19 October 1944.

⁸² AH, 020-011903-0015, Waijiaobu, Soubu Zhuyinduguojuntaobing 1, 21 June 1945.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 27 April 1945.

for the Chinese in India. The effort of the Chinese civil and military organizations in India to rein in gambling houses and opium dens, discipline local Chinese residents through promoting the New Life Movement, arrest deserters, and sponsor the government-affiliated Chinese schools were seen by the British as signs of a conspiracy that would eventually turn India's Chinatowns into ghettos that were distantly administered by the Chinese government.⁸⁵ In being asked by the Chinese authorities to help arrest the Chinese deserters, the British found a good opportunity to reassert their control of the Chinatowns in Calcutta. An agreement was soon reached between the Chinese and the British that allowed the Calcutta Police to arrest any suspects they found, whether they committed crimes or not.⁸⁶ In May 1945, around 80 policemen from the Calcutta Police were deployed to patrol the city's Chinatowns day and night.⁸⁷ By July 1945, 104 suspected Chinese deserters were jailed in Calcutta.⁸⁸

The Return of 'Chen Ching Lin'

To further counter the Chinese infiltration, the British also began to watch over all Chinese official and semi-official organizations across India and cancel suspected individuals's visas.⁸⁹ The growing unrest in Calcutta's Chinatowns in 1945 drove the British to take further action. In August 1945, the Calcutta Police looked into the roster of the Central Trust, a Chinese official organization affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Finance. They found a Chinese staff member of the Central Trust named Chen Ching Lin. Suspecting this man was the one they had hunted across India, the Calcutta Police arrested him in the office of the Central Trust at 14 Esplanade Mansions, Calcutta, on 24 August 1945.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ NAI, Home Political, E_1945_NA_F-16-49, from Assistant Director, Home Department to Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, 30 January 1945.

⁸⁶ AH, 020-011903-0015, Waijiaobu, Soubu Zhuyinduguojuntaobing 1, 26 April 1945.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ AH, 020-011903-0015, Waijiaobu, Soubu Zhuyinduguojuntaobing 1, 9 August 1945.

⁸⁹ NAI, Home Political, E_1945_NA_F-16-49, from A. W. Lovatt to the Chief Commissioner, Delhi, 2 October 1945.

⁹⁰ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from V. Shankar to D. S. (E), 21 December 1945.

In the prosecution, 'Chen Ching Lin'⁹¹ argued that he had lost his Registration Certificate issued in Bombay while undergoing treatment in the Presidency General Hospital, Calcutta. Nevertheless, he well remembered the serial number of his certificate, which was 16465. On the grounds that the serial number and the name of this man were rightly matched with the information provided by the Bombay Police, the Calcutta Police were convinced that they had caught the long-wanted Chen Ching Lin.⁹² Nevertheless, the British intelligence officers failed to obtain any meaningful information from this 'Chen Ching Lin', and thus concluded that he was just an ordinary deserter rather than a spy.⁹³

On 6 September 1945, 'Chen Ching Lin' was sentenced to a fine of 50 Rupees in lieu of one month's rigorous imprisonment for the contravention of the Registration of Foreigners Act. As he could not pay the fine, he was sent to jail. On release, 'Chen Ching Lin' was re-arrested under the Foreigners Order 1939 for being a deserter from the Chinese Army.⁹⁴

While 'Chen Ching Lin' was still in jail, the Calcutta Police received a telegraph forwarded by the Assam Police in October 1945, which stated that a Chen Ching Lin (Registration Certificate No. 16465) left British India via Hell Gate in Assam on 30 September 1945.⁹⁵ The conflicting information confused the British police officers and led them to suspect the real identity of the 'Chen Ching Lin' in the jail of Calcutta. Nevertheless, unwilling to pour more resources into a further investigation of the case because of the chaos in postwar Bengal, the Calcutta Police soon concluded that the man in their custody was the real Chen Cheng Lin, and the one who was at large happened to get hold of Chen Ching Lin's registration certificate and used it to pass the border checkpoint at Assam.⁹⁶

⁹¹ I will use 'Chen Ching Lin' (the name with single quotation marks) to refer to the one who was arrested in Calcutta to avoid confusion after that.

⁹² NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from R. A. Dutch to the Secretary to the Government of India, 19 September 1945.

⁹³ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from K. Tolson to C. P. Chen, 31 August 1945.

⁹⁴ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from 2nd Addl. Secy. to the Gov. of Bengal to the Secy. to the Gov. of India, 8 November 1945.

⁹⁵ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from Restis, Bombay to Home, New Delhi, 31 October 1945.

⁹⁶ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from F. Singh to V. Shankar, 20 December 1945. The suspicious aspect of the judgement of the Calcutta Police is that they did not explain why that 'Chen Ching Lin' in their custody did not report that his registration certificate was taken away by others but just stated that he lost it himself. Furthermore, the Calcutta Police failed to elaborate on how could 'Chen Ching Lin', a cashier working in a Chinese restaurant, ended up as a staff in a government-affiliated bank.

Although it is now impossible to collect concrete evidence to judge which Chen Ching Lin is the real one, the British intelligence report regarding the activities of Chen Ching Lin dated back to July 1944 does provide some hints. In a piece of the intelligence report, it was stated that Chen Ching Lin planned to go to Assam to look for plantation jobs.⁹⁷ If this information is creditable, that 'Chen Ching Lin' who worked in the Central Trust in Calcutta and was arrested by the Calcutta Police in August 1945 was most likely an imposter who bought the Registration Certificate information from the real Chen Ching Lin.⁹⁸ The real Chen Ching Lin, who still had the identity documents in hand, went to Assam for work before he left for Burma in September 1945.

While in jail, 'Chen Ching Lin' asked one of the jailors to write an English petition letter for him. He insisted that he had been detained without committing any fault or crime in Calcutta in the letter. Since his imprisonment brought his family to grief and suffering, 'Chen Ching Lin' asked the Calcutta Police to repatriate him to China immediately.⁹⁹ Considering the chaotic situation in postwar Calcutta and the cost of the jail, the Calcutta Police accepted his petition and agreed to ask the Chinese Consul-General to take charge of the repatriation.¹⁰⁰

In fact, the great hunt for the Chinese deserters in Calcutta coordinated by the Chinese and British authorities in 1945 failed to improve local security. As the Second World War came to an end in August 1945, the wartime business in Calcutta declined dramatically. Many Chinese refugees and deserters who were laid off from factories, restaurants, and shops joined local gangs such as the Pacific Club, resulting in remarkable growth in gang activities.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from J. B. Brown to the Secretary to the Government of India, 28 July 1944.

⁹⁸ Since the black market of fake identity documents in Calcutta's Chinatowns was very active during the war, it was possible that people would also trade the information of their identity documents. A deserter could buy the information of the identity document of a legal resident to whitewash his own identity.

⁹⁹ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from Superintendent Presidency Jail, Calcutta to the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Security Control, Calcutta, 26 November 1945.

¹⁰⁰ NAI, Home Political, E_1944_NA_F-88, from H. E. Richardson to the Secretary-in-Charge, Office of the Commissioner of China to India, New Delhi, 7 January 1946.

¹⁰¹ AH, 020-011903-0015, Waijiaobu, Soubu Zhuyinduguojuntaobing 1, 17 January 1946.

In late 1945 and early 1946, the gang violence in Calcutta's Chinatowns developed to the extent that neither the local law enforcement nor the Chinese authorities could control it. On the night of 30 October 1945, three members of the Pacific Club broke into the house of the owner of Guangxingchang Gold Jewelry Store in Calcutta's Bowbazar with pistols and knives. They raided cash and jewellery valued up to 9,000 Rupees.¹⁰² In December 1945, one of the ringleaders of the Pacific Club, Lin Shao-ju, led a number of the members on a visit to the Chinatown in Tangra.¹⁰³ Chinese-owned leather factories in Tangra were blackmailed and extorted. Lin Shao-ju threatened that there would be consequences for those who failed to give them money. On the night of 13 January 1946, members of the Pacific Club set fire to the leather factories in Tangra, whose owners did not meet their demand. The fire soon spread to other buildings in the district and burned down nearly 50 leather factories in Tangra.¹⁰⁴

By late 1945, the possibility of a British withdrawal from India was also looming. Having neither interest in nor resources to keep the Chinese deserters in jail, the British repeatedly pressed the Chinese Consul-General in Calcutta to take over their repatriation.¹⁰⁵ For fear that the detainees would escape and make further trouble, the Chinese Consul-General shared with the British anxiety over their repatriation. It had repeatedly asked the Headquarters of the Kunming Military Police to dispatch military police to Calcutta to bring the deserters back since December 1945. Nevertheless, for more than four months, no response had been received.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² AH, 020-011903-0016, Waijiaobu, Soubu zhuyinduguojuntaobing 2, 12 March 1946.

¹⁰³ Most Chinese visitors who came to Calcutta during the Second World War resided in the Bowbazar Chinatown, which sits in the city centre. Oxfeld finds that the Tangra Chinatown is cut off from Calcutta's downtown area by a huge drainage channel and mountains of garbage. The Tangra area was a residential quarter of Indian Dalits who were engaged in the tanning leather business in the early twentieth century (a reason why this area is far away from the urban centre). Some Hakka Chinese shoemakers were then attracted to this area for easy access to raw materials and set up their own leather factories, see Oxfeld, *Blood, Sweat, and Mahjong*, 51-78. Zhang Xing finds that the demand for leather products during the Second World War made tannery a lucrative and profitable business, resulting in an increase in the Chinese-owned leather factories up to 70, see Xing, *The Chinese Community in Calcutta*, 87.

¹⁰⁴ AH, 020-011903-0016, Waijiaobu, Soubu zhuyinduguojuntaobing 2, 26 June 1947.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 16 March 1946.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 27 March 1946.

Since the end of the Second World War, conflicts between the Chinese Nationalist government led by the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had broken out across the country. Agents of the CCP infiltrated universities and colleges in Kunming and worked hard to weaken the KMT rule there. In late November 1945, pro-CCP students and professors in Kunming organized class boycott campaigns to criticize the KMT's responsibility for the ongoing civil war. On 1 December 1945, clashes between cadets of a local KMT military school and students broke out in several universities in Kunming and led to heavy casualties to pro-CCP students and staff (four dead and more than fifty injured). The 1 December incident aroused outrage among college students, and a general class boycott campaign in Kunming was called. For fear that the CCP would further provoke unrest by supporting the student movement, military police in Kunming were mobilized to patrol the city and watch over the demonstrations from late 1945 to early 1946.¹⁰⁷

It was not until March 1946, when the student movement receded, that Headquarters of the Kunming Military Police began to pay attention to the request from Calcutta.¹⁰⁸ On 5 April 1946, three military policemen were dispatched from Kunming to Calcutta to address the case.¹⁰⁹ By the time the military police arrived, there were 22 Chinese deserters in Calcutta's prisons.¹¹⁰ The British immediately transferred these inmates to the Chinese police. On the morning of 16 April 1946, an aircraft of the China National Aviation Corporation, which was chartered by the Kunming Military Police, took all the deserters back to China.¹¹¹

Almost five months after he petitioned for repatriation, 'Chen Ching Lin' was finally on his way home. Among his fellow inmates on the flight were these: Yang Chien-ting, who sold fake stamps and certificates in Calcutta; Hsu Ya-ping, who was arrested in Ramgarh just as he tried to desert; Li Pao Sheng, who was a barber in the army before he came to

¹⁰⁷ For the causes, personal experience, and impact of the Dec. 1st Incident, see The Committee of the CCP History of the Yunnan Province and the Committee of Yunnan Normal University ed., *Yieryiyundong* (The Dec. 1st Movement) (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshichubanshe, 1988); Li Ling, 'Yieryiyundong qinliji' (experiencing the Dec. 1st movement), *Bainianchao* 10 (2015): 47-54.

¹⁰⁸ AH, 020-011903-0016, Waijiaobu, Soubu zhuyinduguojuantaobing 2, 6 April 1936.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 7 April 1946.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 15 April 1946.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Calcutta on leave and failed to rejoin his unit; Lin Tsai-lai, who was a cook in Ramgarh and deserted to Calcutta to work in restaurants.¹¹²

Conclusion

On 22 April 1946, six days after 'Chen Ching Lin' was taken back to China, the Headquarters of the Kunming Military Police telegraphed the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they had completed the investigation of the cases regarding the 22 deserters repatriated from Calcutta. Only one man, whose name was Deng Bolang, was a real deserter, while the other 21 were all ordinary overseas Chinese citizens living in Calcutta who had lost their identity documents. Considering that these men had no place to stay, the Kunming Military Police decided to enlist them into the unit as military policemen.¹¹³

On the grounds that the colonial archives and the correspondence between the Chinese authorities have provided substantial evidence to support the presumption that Chen Ching Lin is a deserter, the judgement of the Kunming Military Police, without providing any new evidence, is not only confusing but also suspicious.

Following the 1 December incident, the Kunming Military Police had to keep the student movement at bay and check communist insurgents. The police force was understrength and overworked. The police authorities were desperate to obtain any form of reinforcement. In this context, it is possible that the Kunming Military Police deliberately set the deserters, who had at least some military experience, accessible in order to enlist them into their own unit.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Ibid., 1 November 1946.

¹¹³ Ibid., 22 April 1946.

¹¹⁴ The enforcing enlistment of deserters in the Nationalist force during the War of Resistance and the Chinese Civil War was not unusual, see Zhong Hua, 'Lunkangzhanshiqi guomindang jundui de fubaiweni' (The corruption of the Nationalist forces during the War of Resistance), *Junshilishi yanjiu* 4 (2003): 91–98; Xu Deli, 'Kanzhangshiqi xinanminzudiqu taobibingyi weizaowenshu xianxiangyanjiu' (During the period of Anti-Japanese War about the research of forgery phenomenon for evading military service in the Southwest minority area), *Guizhouminzu yanjiu* 1 (2014): 154–156; Luo Yuming and Li Ke, 'Kangrizhanshengshiqi guomindangjundui taobing renshukao' (Textual Research about the number of KMT army deserter in period of the War of Resistance against Japan), *Anhuishixue* 4 (2018): 97–103.

By presenting the trajectory of Chen Ching Lin's desertion and return, this chapter actually sheds light on how the Chinese Nationalist government's aim to check its subjects overseas conflicted with the agenda of the British geopolitics in the 1940s. Scholars studying overseas Chinese have long argued that the modern Chinese state used overseas Chinese as resources for facilitating their own agendas.¹¹⁵ From the 1930s onwards, the Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek worked hard to bring overseas Chinese under control. By setting up the KMT party cells among diasporic Chinese communities across the world, the Nationalist government tried to mobilize their loyalties and wealth. Furthermore, disciplining the behaviour of its overseas subjects was assumed by the Chinese leadership to help promote the international status of the Chinese state and therefore strengthening the legitimacy of their domestic rule.¹¹⁶

In November 1943, Chiang Kai-shek was invited to attend a conference in Cairo with Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt. The Cairo Conference was a crucial moment that recognized China's status as a great power.¹¹⁷ China's new position in the world, however, was

¹¹⁵ Michael Godley, *The Mandarin-Capitalism from Nanyang: Overseas Chinese Enterprise in the Modernization of China 1893–1911* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Wang Gungwu, *China and Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991); Prasenjit Duara, 'Nationalist among Transnationals: Overseas Chinese and the Idea of China, 1900–1911', in Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini eds., *Underground Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 39–60; Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*; Elena Barabantseva, *Overseas Chinese, Ethnic Minorities, and Nationalism: Decentering China* (London: Routledge, 2011); Ana Maria Candela, 'Nation, Migration and Governance: Cantonese Migrants to Peru and the Making of Overseas Chinese Nationalism, 1849–2013', Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2013; Chan, *Diaspora's Homeland*.

¹¹⁶ Yoji Akashi, *The Nanyang Chinese National Salvation Movement, 1937–1941* (Lawrence: Center for East Asian Studies, University of Kansas, 1970); Stephen Leong, 'The Malayan Overseas Chinese and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1941', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 10:2 (1979): 293–320; Diana Lary, 'Introduction', in Hans van de Ven, Diana Lary, and Stephen MacKinnon eds., *Negotiating China's Destiny in World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 1–10.

¹¹⁷ Most scholars to date agree that the Cairo Conference was a turning point for China's position as a great power in the world, see Tao Wenzhao, 'Kailuohuiyi shi meiguo duihua zhengce de zhuanzhedianma?' (Is the Cairo Conference a turning point in the U. S. government's China policy?), *Lishiyanjiu* 6 (1995): 110–119; Zhao Zhihui, 'Kailuohuiyi xinlun' (A new remark on the Cairo Conference), *Shijielishi* 5 (2004): 49–58; Wang Jianlang, 'Kangzhan yu zhongguo zai guojitixizhong de diweibianqian yu juezheshuanbian' (How the War of Resistance influenced China's position in the world system), *Shixueyuekan* 9 (2005): 10–13; Ronald Ian Heiferman, *The Cairo Conference of 1943: Roosevelt, Churchill, Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang* (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Company Inc., Publisher, 2011); Mitter, *Forgotten Ally*; Beverley Loke, 'Conceptualizing the Role and Responsibility of Great Power: China's Participation in Negotiations toward a Post Second World War Order', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 24:2 (2013): 209–226.

embarrassed by the riots of Chinese sailors and the widespread desertion of the CEF in India. In this context, the Chinese Nationalist government determined to take action against the desertion and illegal activities in India's Chinatowns.

The British authorities in New Delhi and London, however, saw the disciplinary actions of the Chinese authorities as an intervention, if not a conspiracy, against the British rule in India. In fact, the British colonial authorities had long worried that the Chinese government would interfere in the affairs of overseas Chinese communities in colonies in Southeast Asia and make these settlements Chinese concessions that were out of the control of the British.¹¹⁸ Although the Chinese communities in India did not draw much attention from the Government of India owing to its small size, Chiang Kai-shek's support for the Indian nationalist movement, the Chinese military build-up in India, and the political crisis caused by the Quit India Movement had gradually convinced the British authorities that the Chinese were all too ready to intervene the internal politics of India.¹¹⁹ The desertion of the Chinese soldiers, the gambling houses in Bombay, and the Chinese gangsters in Calcutta were assumed by the British to be troubles deliberately caused by the Chinese government to facilitate their political agendas. This concern transformed the Government of India's policy towards India's Chinatowns, while tightened surveillance and strengthened law enforcement was exerted to prevent the Chinese infiltration.

Therefore, Chen Ching Lin, his imposter, and other Chinese deserters in India were trapped by the Chinese Nationalist government's ambitious plan to discipline its overseas subjects and the British Raj's geopolitical

¹¹⁸ Carl Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800–1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); C. F. Yong and R. B. McKenna, *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya, 1912–1949* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990); James Warren, *Rickshaw Coolie: A People's History of Singapore, 1880–1940* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2003); Jonathan Saha, 'Colonization, Criminalization and Complicity: Policing Gambling in Burma, 1880–1920', *South East Asian Research* 21:4 (2013): 655–672; Yi Li, *Chinese in Colonial Burma: A Migrant Community in a Multiethnic State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

¹¹⁹ According to Rana Mitter, the British diplomatic view regarding the capability of the Chinese Nationalist government changed during the War, from taking the Chinese government as a corrupted and incapable one to regard it as one of its potential competitors in the post-war period, see Rana Mitter, 'British Diplomacy and Changing Views of Chinese Governmental Capability across the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945', in Hans van de Ven, Diana Lary, and Stephen MacKinnon eds., *Negotiating China's Destiny in World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 35–51.

concerns. However, the dilemma soon dissipated after the Second World War, as both countries dissolved into chaos, which transformed the life trajectories of these deserters too. Since the British rule in India was coming to an end, they had lost all interest in following the cases of the Chinese deserters and urged quick repatriation. The social unrest caused by the conflict between the Nationalists and Communists in China immediately after the war, however, first delayed the return of these deserters and later turned them into soldiers again.

The disrupted and delayed return journey for 'Chen Ching Lin' is actually a shared experience for many other Chinese sojourners in India. When the global war ended, civil wars and social unrest arose across Asia. The wartime highways that channelled the mobilities of personnel and commodities between India and China and sustained the prosperities of the sojourner communities were soon closed. Many Chinese sojourners were then trapped in India. Their livelihood was impacted by the gloomy economic prospects and social unrest. Their hometowns back in China were ravaged by the civil war. And their returning routes were disrupted by the postwar chaos. In the next chapter, I will further elaborate on how the post-war chaos in India and China changed the life trajectories of the Chinese sojourners by telling the story of the evacuation of the Lahore Elementary Flying Training School, which was built in 1943 to train Chinese pilots and mechanics. Finally, I will try to show how the experiences of these Chinese sojourners merged with the dominant political backdrops in India and China—the ending of the British Raj and the Chinese Civil War—at that time.

5

Pilots

On the morning of 3 December 1945, 12 American-made Stearman training aircraft took off from the Walton Airport in Lahore, British India.¹ Their destination was Kunming, China. The following week, another 45 aircraft, mostly flown by Chinese pilots who received their training in the Lahore Elementary Flying Training School (LEFTS), left for Kunming from Lahore. On their way back, these light training aircraft had to stop at Cawnpore (at Uttar Pradesh, India), Allahabad (at Uttar Pradesh, India), Tulihal (at Imphal, India), Bhamo (in northern Burma), and Baoshan (in southwest China) for refuelling and maintenance before they landed in Kunming.² This air route was opened for the Hump airlift during the Second World War when the Allies flew their military supplies to China to support China's war against Japan. The Hump was widely known as one of the most dangerous air routes in the world on the grounds that pilots had to fly their aircraft into the eastern end of the Himalayas, where violent turbulence, high-speed winds, and ice were proven to be extremely hazardous. The Hump was flown by experienced American pilots with long-range cargo aircraft for most of the time. The flight of more than 50 small aircraft over the Hump in December 1945 was an endeavour that had never been tried before, and it was also the last mission on the Hump route as the Second World War had come to an end months before.

Although this mission was very ambitious, it has never drawn any serious attention from historians. Questions concerning the backdrop of this mission have neither been raised nor answered. Why did the Chinese send their pilots to Lahore for training? What was the background of the LEFTS? Given the fact that the Hump route was perilous and that the war

¹ TNA, AIR 395/1, Operation Record Book, RAF Liaison Office Chinese EFTS, 3 December 1945.

² *Ibid.*, 10 December 1945.

was already over, why were the Chinese still in a hurry to fly their aircraft over the Hump? These questions cannot be addressed without referring to the political crisis across Asia during and immediately after the Second World War.

An Integrated Framework for Modern Indian and Chinese Studies

Scholars have long argued that Second World War did not end in Asia after August 1945. Instead, it continued after 1945 in a range of intense and bloody wars, against both civil and a revived European colonialism.³ More often than not, historians tend to study these conflicts and wars within either fixed regions, such as South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, or specific countries such as Indonesia, China, and Korea. For this reason, there are studies on the Indonesian War of Independence, the Chinese Civil War, the First Indochina War, and the Partition of British India.⁴ Although practitioners have been trying hard to promote the perspective of transregional connections in the context of the global cold war in recent years,⁵ the political crisis that broke out in Asia between the final stage of Second World War and the fully-fledged Cold War period has been explored mainly within the realm of national history.⁶

³ C. A. Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), I.

⁴ Nicolas Tarling, *Britain, Southeast Asia and the Onset of the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Paul McGarr, *The Cold War in South Asia: Britain, the United States, and the Indian Subcontinent, 1945–1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Christopher Goscha and Christian Ostermann eds., *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945–1962* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁵ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Masuda Hajimu, *Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁶ Robert Cribb, *Gangsters and Revolutionaries: The Jakarta People's Militia and the Indonesian Revolution, 1945–1949* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991); Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict during and after the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, 1941–1946* (Singapore: NUS Press, 1983); Tim Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Balwant Singh, *Independence and Democracy in Burma, 1945–52: The Turbulent Years* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

In India, the period during and after the Second World War was a crucial moment when an abrupt and violent partition was looming over the course of India's path to independence. Scholarly attention has largely been drawn to the political negotiations between the Congress Party, the Muslim League, and the British authorities.⁷ In China, this period had the same significance as the Communists and the Nationalists were preparing for the full-scale civil war.⁸ For most historians of India and China, however, their research subjects (the end of the British Raj and the Chinese Civil War) are exclusive and irrelevant to one another.

Recent developments in historiography in modern India and China, and the critique of national history in particular,⁹ have uncovered the multifaceted connections between the two countries during and immediately after the Second World War.¹⁰ Issues such as Taixu's and Dai Jitao's travel in India to reconnect the two nations through Buddhist exchanges, Chiang Kai-shek's visit to India in 1942 and his relationship with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, and Tan Yunshan's nationalist activities in India have all been examined.¹¹ For scholars of

⁷ Rakesh Ankit, *India in the Interregnum: Interim Government, September 1946–August 1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁸ Diana Lary, *China's Civil War: A Social History, 1945–1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁹ National history refers to a historical thinking and writing genre that takes the nation-state as the only and exclusive analytical subject. National history became the hegemonic way in people's understanding of the human past in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By emphasizing the linear conception of temporality, national history confers the nation-state to exist in an unbroken past and a progressive future. It indicates that all people living within the boundaries of the modern nation-state share the same past and that the history of the nation is the exclusive property of the single national entity. For the rise of national history and its critiques, see David Potter, 'The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa', in David Potter ed., *The South and the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 34–83; Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (London: Zed Books, 1986); Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

¹⁰ Prasenjit Duara, *The Crisis of Global Modernity: Asian Traditions and a Sustainable Future* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Yin Cao, *From Policemen to Revolutionaries: A Sikh Diaspora in Global Shanghai, 1885–1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Sen, *India, China, and the World*.

¹¹ Tianshi, 'Chiang Kai-shek and Jawaharlal Nehru', 127–140; Samarani, *Shaping the Future of Asia: Chiang Kai-shek, Nehru and China-India Relations during the Second World War Period*; Itty Abraham, 'Bandung and State Formation in Post-Colonial Asia', in See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya eds. *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian African Conference for International Order* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), 48–67; Sinderpal Singh, 'From Delhi to Bandung: Nehru, "Indian-ness" and "Pan-Asian-ness"', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 1 (2011): 51–64; Brian Tsui, *China's Conservative Revolution: The Quest for a New Order, 1927–1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

India-China connections, the post-war years were a period when the cultural interactions between India and China and the friendship between both countries' elites in the early twentieth century gave way to political contentions as the issue of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet emerged.¹² The disagreement between the Chinese Nationalist government and the interim Indian government over the status of Tibet was inherited by their direct heirs—the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India—and became one of the main triggers of the Sino-Indian War in 1962.¹³

When the above India-China connections in the 1940s are discussed by scholars, however, they have mainly focused on high politics and social elites. Few studies have tried to explore how ordinary people such as smugglers, deserters, and sailors took part in the connections and how these connections influenced their lives. Furthermore, the dominant political backdrops for India and China during that period—the chaotic ending of the British Raj and the Chinese Civil War—are generally untouched by the studies of India-China connections. These problems can be attributed to the lack of appropriate cases from below and the demand for a framework that could integrate modern Indian and Chinese history into a single narrative.

This chapter follows the recent trend of unearthing long-forgotten connections and interactions between India and China during the colonial period.¹⁴ Different from previous studies that are still preoccupied with the nation-bounded bilateral relations, it underscores the importance of integrating modern Indian and Chinese history into a single analytical framework for providing alternative perspectives and transcending exclusive national narratives.¹⁵ Taking the establishment of the LEFTS in Lahore and its evacuation by the end of the Second World War as a case

¹² Hsiao-Ting, *Tibet and Nationalist China's Frontier*.

¹³ Sen, *India, China, and the World*, 337–349.

¹⁴ Since Lahore was in the territory of British India until 1947, a study of the Lahore EFTS from 1942 to 1946 has been taken as a study of India-China connections instead of Pakistan-China connections. The colonial period of the India-China connections refers to the period from the eighteenth century when the British established the colonial rule in India to 1947, when British India was partitioned into India and Pakistan (including East Pakistan, today's Bangladesh).

¹⁵ Primary sources of the LEFTS are mostly British official documents, which only shed light on the British official view on the event. By putting the LEFTS in the broader context of the Anglo-China tension during the Second World War, the chaotic ending of the British Raj, and the Chinese Civil War, and by combining British official documents with Chinese and Indian archives, this study tries to transcend the national and colonial narrative of an event that supposes to be transnational. In so doing, this study contends that the transnationalization of both perspectives and primary sources could help address challenges brought about by the overreliance on national and colonial materials. For the limitations and issues of national and colonial

in this chapter, I will try to tell a story that can link the chaotic ending of the British Raj with the Chinese Civil War. In so doing, it hopes to unearth the experiences of the Chinese sojourners during the final days of the British Raj and bring to light an Indian aspect of China's war against Japan and the Chinese Civil War.

Establishing the LEFTS

In early 1942, the Japanese invaded Burma. By May 1942, the defence of the Allies in Burma collapsed, and the Burma Road that connected China with the outside world was cut off. After that, transportation of supplies of materials, equipment, and gas to China for use by the Chinese Air Force became increasingly difficult. Against this background, the Chinese Nationalist government asked the Government of India to help transfer one of the Chinese flying training schools to India for easy access to supplies in June 1942.¹⁶

Indeed, the Americans began to take Chinese cadets to the United States for flight training as early as October 1941. These potential pilots were flown from Kunming to Bombay or Calcutta and then travelled by sea to San Francisco via Australia.¹⁷ On arrival, it was found immediately that nearly half of these cadets were either physically or mentally unsuitable for flying. As a result, those unqualified had to be sent all the way back to China.¹⁸ To save time and resources, the Chinese government wanted the proposed flying training school in India to provide elementary training for the cadets. Then, only those who completed the elementary training courses would be sent on to the United States for intermediate and advanced training.¹⁹

archives, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ TNA, AIR 23/5348, from Ho Yin-ching to Major General J. G. Bruce, 29 June 1942.

¹⁷ Zhu Liyang, *Zhongguo Kongjun Kangzhan Jiyi* (Memories of the Chinese Air Force in the Second Sino-Japanese War) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Daxue Chubanshe, 2015), 311–313.

¹⁸ TNA, AIR 23/5348, from Air Vice Marshal T. M. Williams to Group Captain, Staff Office, 11 August 1942.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

The Government of India, however, declined the Chinese proposal initially. It pointed out that there was no training facility for the Chinese at that moment in India. Even if the Chinese insisted on building a training institution from scratch, the process would be too slow to meet the demands of war. Furthermore, the Government of India could not provide any aircraft for the training school. For these reasons, the Government of India suggested that the Chinese should keep sending their pupils to the United States.²⁰

Almost at the same time as the Government of India declined the Chinese proposal, they found some 30 Ryan Trainer Aircraft in Allahabad provided by the Americans to the Chinese and were supposed to be transported to China. Nevertheless, due to the cut-off of the Burma Road, it was impossible to move them to China at the time. Desiring to strengthen their own capability for flight training, the Government of India harboured a plan to take all these aircraft for their own use.²¹

The news of the Ryan Trainer Aircraft in Allahabad, however, soon reached the Chinese authorities. The Chinese government, therefore, asked to use those aircraft already in India for the training school.²² Realizing that they had no sound reason to turn down the Chinese again, the British Foreign Office pressed the Government of India to accept the Chinese proposal based on the belief that the offer would greatly improve the Anglo-Chinese relations and facilitate the operations of the Royal Air Force (RAF) in China.²³

In August 1942, the Government of India finally agreed to let the Chinese set up an elementary flying training school in India and promised to provide the aerodrome, accommodation facilities, rations and daily allowance, and petrol and oil to the Chinese trainees and staff.²⁴

Concerning the location of the training school, the British mainly focused on north-western Indian cities such as Lahore, Ferozepur, and

²⁰ TNA, AIR 23/5348, from Air Headquarters, New Delhi to British Military Mission, Chungking, 4 July 1942.

²¹ TNA, AIR 23/5348, from Governor General, New Delhi to Secretary of State for India, London, 4 July 1942.

²² TNA, AIR 23/5348, from Air Headquarter, India to Air Attache, Chungking, 11 January 1943.

²³ TNA, FO 371/25829, from Foreign Office to G. N. Moleworth, India Office, 18 August 1943.

²⁴ TNA, FO 371/35829, from British Embassy, Chungking to Minister for Foreign Affairs, Chungking, 29 January 1943.

Cawnpore. Finally, the Walton Airport (Lahore Civil Aerodrome) near the city of Lahore was selected due to four factors.²⁵ Firstly, the Walton Airport used to be the Initial Training Centre for Indian pilots serving in the Royal Indian Air Force. Therefore, facilities for pilot training already existed there.²⁶ Secondly, although Lahore was very hot during summer, there was ample water supply close to the aerodrome. Thirdly, because there were bungalows next to the aerodrome, accommodation for the trainees and staff could easily be settled. Lastly, there was a satellite airfield for the Lahore Civil Aerodrome that could be used as a landing ground for circuits and landings to avoid congestion in the main aerodrome circuit.²⁷

After several months of preparation, in April 1943, the LEFTS was officially launched at the Walton Airport in Lahore. The school was composed of nine barrack blocks and staffed by 108 Chinese officers and 112 Chinese mechanics with around 150 training aircraft.²⁸ Together with these staff were 125 Chinese cadets of the first course of the EFTS, who would undergo three months of training. Only those who qualified for all courses could be sent to the United States for further training.²⁹

The British Concern over the LEFTS

In November 1944, a documentary of the Chinese cadet's daily life and training activities in the LEFTS was shot by the No. 3 RAF Film Production Unit. The documentary started with three Chinese mechanics worked on a PT-17 trainer aircraft. They had a brief discussion to study how to fix some broken parts of the plane's engine. The shot then turned to a Chinese cadet. He had just received an order from his instructor and ran to his plane. With the help of two assistants, he went into

²⁵ TNA, AIR 23/5348, from Group Captain, Staff Officer to Air Vice Marshal T. M. Williams, 19 November 1942.

²⁶ Rana Chhina, *The Eagle Strikers: The Royal Indian Air Force 1932–1950* (New Delhi: Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research, 2006), 291.

²⁷ TNA, AIR 23/5348, from Org. 1 to Air Vice Marshal T. M. Williams, 1 August 1942.

²⁸ In addition to the 30 Ryan Trainer Aircraft in Allahabad, another 120 trainer aircraft (American-made Boeing Stearman PT-17) in Karachi that was supposed to be transported to China were handed over to the Lahore Elementary Flying Training School in November 1942.

²⁹ TNA, AIR 395/1, Operation Record Book, RAF Liaison Office Chinese EFTS, 31 August 1943.

the aircraft and started up the engine. After a brief taxiing, his plane took off into the sky. Later, a group of Chinese cadets marched into the school. They were newcomers who had just arrived from China. These new cadets were shown around the school and greeted by Lt/Col. C. Tseng, the Chinese Commandant of the EFTS and W/Cdr. H. F. Bishop, the British Liaison Officer. Flight clothes and other equipment were issued to these new cadets. Lt/Col. C. Tseng, W/Cdr. H. F. Bishop, and other Chinese and British officers in the school then appeared in the school's Liaison Office for a conference about the new buildings and projects at the school. The last shot of the documentary was an aerial view of the airport and training field. Cadets and instructors were on parade to salute their commandants while trainer aircraft were taking off and landing on the circuit.³⁰

From April 1943 to June 1946, the LEFTS launched 25 courses and trained more than 2,000 Chinese cadets. Additionally, around 1,000 Chinese aviation mechanics also received their training in the LEFTS. On average, the duration of each course was three months. On arrival, cadets were given one week of ground instruction by Chinese instructors before they took the flight instruction.

The landing was particularly dangerous for the Chinese cadets. On several occasions, they lost control of their aircraft and crashed.³¹ Another challenge to the Chinese cadets was the cross-country flying practice in which they needed to fly from Lahore to either Agra, Karachi, or Bombay and return. Accidents were not uncommon during the cross-country practice, and sometimes cadets even lost their lives when their aircraft crashed.³² In addition to flying, bombing and navigation training had been added to the courses from December 1944. All cadets were required to take the bombing and navigation courses.³³

At the end of each course, American pilots would be sent to Lahore to check the performance of Chinese cadets.³⁴ The chance of being rejected was relatively high. For example, in the second course, 125 cadets were checked by American test pilots, and among them only 87 passed

³⁰ Ibid., 27 November 1944.

³¹ Ibid., 31 July 1944.

³² Ibid., 22 March 1944.

³³ TNA, FO 371/4303, Memorandum from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the British Embassy, 15 August 1944.

³⁴ TNA, AIR 395/1, Operation Record Book, RAF Liaison Office Chinese EFTS, 14 February 1945.

the test.³⁵ The passing rate for the third course was even lower, at only 77/126.³⁶ Those unqualified were rejected for further training and sent back to China.³⁷

The Chinese in the EFTS also had frequent interactions with local Indian troops and civil authorities. Indian Royal Air Force pilots were invited to the school to exchange flying experiences with their Chinese colleagues, while Indian and Chinese mechanics conducted joint exercises.³⁸ Furthermore, Chinese cadets also actively participated in several civil ceremonies. On 11 April 1944, 27 Chinese trainer aircraft took part in a 'Fly Past' over the War Service Exhibition held at Minto Park in Lahore, which was greatly appreciated by local residents.³⁹ Three months later, Chinese aircraft joined the National War Front Meeting at Lyallpur by dropping garlands of flowers over the assembling crowds and demonstrating formation and aerobatic flying.⁴⁰

As the training course went into its second year, however, the British became increasingly uneasy with the Chinese activities in Lahore. One of the principal complaints the British made to the Chinese was that they thought some unprofessional behaviour by the Chinese caused too much trouble for the British side.

The British complained that the Chinese rarely forwarded them any information about the arrival of many Chinese personnel in Lahore. Sometimes, the British Liaison Officer in the training school knew the new arrivals only when they were already in the camps. The lack of communication in this regard led to great chaos for the local British provision arrangement department. Consequently, uniforms, rations, and accommodations were often not able to be arranged for the Chinese due to the very short notice.⁴¹

Another British complaint was about the overhaul of aircraft and vehicles. The British required that the engines of crashed aircraft in the training school should be stripped and sent to a specific RAF factory for

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 October 1943.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 15 January 1944.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 22 September 1943.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 June 1944.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11 April 1944.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 28 July 1944.

⁴¹ TNA, AIR 23/7646, Observation from RAF Point of View by H. F. Bishop, 16 September 1944.

repair. Nevertheless, they found that the Chinese usually undertook the repair themselves instead of sending them to the RAF factory. As a result, some engines were completely damaged due to the lack of experience of Chinese mechanics.⁴² Regarding the maintenance of vehicles in the training school, it was reported that more than half of the vehicles in the training school were constantly undergoing repair due to the lack of elementary driving knowledge. In 1944 alone, five vehicles were totally destroyed because of slipping the clutch instead changing the gear. The accident rate for Chinese vehicles was reported to be 200% higher than that of any other military unit in Lahore.⁴³

Disputes also occurred when the British tried to construct a new roof for the Chinese mechanics' barrack. The British accused the Chinese of preventing the workers from entering the barrack, arguing that they did not want to be relocated to other barracks temporarily. The construction work, therefore, was delayed for six weeks.⁴⁴

A later investigation, however, indicated that most of these British complaints were groundless. The Chinese would often inform the British of the schedule and the number of new arrivals two weeks in advance. Indeed, the British Liaison Officer in the LEFTS was updated on the number of Chinese in the school three times a week. In this sense, there was no reason for the British to attribute the chaotic arrangement of provisions to the Chinese side.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Chinese claimed that they tried to send broken parts from the aircraft and vehicles to the RAF factory for repair. However, the RAF factory either refused to fix spares for the Chinese or significantly delayed the work. Consequently, the Chinese had to repair the spares themselves even if they were unfamiliar with the work. The Chinese admitted that the faults of inexperienced drivers led to the damage of several vehicles but stressed that it was because the British ignored the Chinese request for experienced drivers.⁴⁶ Regarding the construction of the roof of the barrack, the Chinese stated that they prevented construction workers from entering the barrack because they

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ TNA, AIR 23/7646, Concerning 'Observation from RAF Point of View', 1 August 1945.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

were not notified by the British to evacuate their rooms beforehand. The delay in the roof project was, therefore, the fault of the British due to their failure to contact the Chinese in time.⁴⁷

The frequent disputes between the British and the Chinese shed light on the deep anxieties of the British over the LEFTS. The British worried that the Chinese in India would use too many resources that were supposed to be supplied to the British war effort.⁴⁸ The British also assumed the Chinese would be their potential competitor, if not enemy, after the war and therefore, were reluctant to give their full support.⁴⁹ In a letter written by J. G. Bruce, the General Officer Commanding the Lahore District, to Air Headquarters at New Delhi, he warned that the Chinese would use the LEFTS to build up their own air force, which would be a potential threat to the British interests in Asia after the war.⁵⁰ More importantly, the British worried that the existence of the Chinese in Lahore would eventually add fuel to the Indian nationalist movement. It was reported that Chinese personnel in Lahore did not pay compliments to or salute British officers in public. This move was soon followed by local Indians, who also began to omit to salute the British. In the eyes of the British, this was a direct challenge to their colonial rule in India.⁵¹ By the end of the war, the British concerns and worries had become so great that they decided to terminate most rations and provisions to the Chinese in the LEFTS and urged them to return to China as soon as possible.⁵²

The Civil War Needs the LEFTS

In fact, as the Second World War came to an end, it was not only the British who wanted the Chinese cadets and officers in Lahore to leave

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ TNA, AIR 23/7646, from Office of the Air Attache British Embassy, Chungking to Wing Commander H. E. Bishop, 6 October 1944.

⁴⁹ TNA, AIR 23/5348, from A. A. Chungking to Air HQ, Delhi, 8 September 1943.

⁵⁰ TNA, AIR 23/5348, from J. G. Bruce to Air Headquarter, New Delhi, 4 July 1942.

⁵¹ TNA, AIR 23/7646, from O. C. RAE, Liaison Office, CEFTS, Walton to the Commandant, IDCAFCS, 5 September 1944.

⁵² TNA, AIR 395/1, Operation Record Book, RAF Liaison Office Chinese LEFTS, 20 October 1945.

immediately but also the Chinese Nationalist government, who had an urgent need for these personnel and aircraft.

The Nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek formed a fragile alliance with the Chinese Communists during the War of Resistance. Even though the war with the Japanese was still ongoing, however, clashes between the Nationalist and the Communist forces broke out frequently. Finally, as the end of the Second World War approached, both parties prepared for the seemingly inevitable civil war.

Realizing that a strong air force would give him a great edge over the Communists, who did not have any air strike force at that time, Chiang Kai-shek asked the U. S. government to hand over all American aircraft and logistic materials in India and China to the Nationalists.⁵³ To contain the Communists, the Americans accepted Chiang's proposal.⁵⁴ The aircraft and spare parts in the LEFTS, which were part of the American Lease/Lend materials, were among those handed over to the Chinese.⁵⁵ In September 1945, Chinese officers in the LEFTS formally informed the British that they planned to transport all aircraft, facilities, and cadets at the school back to China within one month.⁵⁶

The hasty action of the Chinese actually had its roots in China. Since the surrender of the Japanese in August 1945, the Communists had tried hard to expand their sphere of influence across the country. In August alone, the Communist forces had defeated the Nationalists in Yetaishan (Shanxi Province), Baoying (Jiangsu Province), Yongjiazhen (Anhui Province), and Tianmen (Hubei Province), and they occupied several vital cities and towns in northern and central China.

The Nationalists, in their turn, determined to eliminate the Communist threat through all available means. In this context, there was a growing need to use the air force in the battles against the Communists. In early October 1945, the Communist troops laid siege to the city of Qinyang in Henan Province. In fear that the city would fall into the hand of the Communists, local commanders asked Chiang Kai-shek to dispatch

⁵³ AH, 002-060100-00203-026, Jiangzhongzheng zongtongwenwu, Shiluegaoben, 26 August 1945.

⁵⁴ AH, 002-020400-00039-017, Jiangzhongzheng zongtongwenwu, Kanluanshiqi, 14 September 1945.

⁵⁵ TNA, AIR 395/1, Operation Record Book, RAF Liaison Office Chinese EFTS, 12 October 1945.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 25 September 1945.

aircraft to bombard the Communist forces and drop supplies to the besieged Nationalist forces.⁵⁷ In the same month, the Communists also began to march into Inner Mongolia and intended to surround Hohhot, the biggest city in the region. Local commanders urged Chiang Kai-shek to provide air cover immediately to deter the Communist offensive.⁵⁸ In late October, even Beijing was under the blockade of the Communist troops, and the air force was again requested urgently for support.⁵⁹

The heavy demand for air support in battles against the Communists across the country exhausted the Nationalists' air force. Chiang Kai-shek soon realized that he needed more aircraft, pilots, and mechanics to win the civil war. The trainer aircraft and pilots with only primary training at the LEFTS were therefore taken as substantial reinforcements.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the original plan of bringing the aircraft and pilots in Lahore back to China within October 1945 failed.

Bringing the EFTS back to China

In fact, throughout October 1945, the Chinese in Lahore was in discussion with the British over how to transport the aircraft back to China. They asked the British to provide 500 crates for storing the aircraft. The British, however, stated that they were unable to make such arrangements because the facilities in Lahore were insufficient.⁶¹ By the end of the month, the Deputy Superintendent of the EFTS, Lt/Col K. S. Chen, was still unable to obtain any supply of packing cases for the aircraft and equipment.⁶²

Being pushed by the Nationalist government and realizing that the lack of packing cases would seriously delay the schedule, Lt/Col K. S. Chen proposed sending two aircraft to fly back to China from Lahore

⁵⁷ AH, 002-090300-00211-020, Jiangzhongzheng zongtongwenwu, kangzhanshiqi 10, 17 October 1945.

⁵⁸ AH, 002-090300-00211-040, Jiangzhongzheng zongtongwenwu, kangzhanshiqi 10, 25 October 1945.

⁵⁹ AH, 002-020400-00003-092, Jiangzhongzheng zongtongwenwu, guogongxieshangyugongj unpanluan, 26 October 1945.

⁶⁰ TNA, AIR 395/1, Operation Record Book, RAF Liaison Office Chinese EFTS, 1 October 1945.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 29 October 1945.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 19 October 1945.

as an experimental flight. If the experiment turned out to be successful, all available aircraft in the LEFTS would fly to China directly instead of being packed into the crates.⁶³ The British soon sanctioned the proposal and agreed to provide refuelling facilities at every stopping point on the proposed route.⁶⁴

On 12 November 1945, two Stearman aircraft from the LEFTS left en route for China. One of them burst a tyre on landing at Cownpore, while the other landed safely in Kunming. Although the pilot reported that the trip would be extremely difficult if bad weather or high winds were encountered en route, the Chinese authorities decided to continue the proposal of flying all aircraft from the LEFTS back to China directly.⁶⁵

Between 3 and 18 December, 57 aircraft from the LEFTS, flown by Chinese cadets, left Lahore for Kunming. Among them, 53 successfully completed the journey. Nevertheless, around 600 Chinese officers, cadets, and mechanics of the LEFTS, as well as spare parts for the aircraft, were still in Lahore, waiting for the ships that could take them back to China.

In fact, the Superintendent of the LEFTS, Col. M. C. Liu, informed the British in November that he had secured a ship in Calcutta that could take all Chinese personnel and equipment to China.⁶⁶ This original attempt, however, was soon proved to be unworkable as the ship was said to be unable to come to Lahore.⁶⁷

As the aircraft had already been dispatched back, the Chinese in Lahore accelerated their move to work out a plan of return. In late December, Col. M. C. Liu told the British that the whole Chinese unit in the LEFTS would go to Calcutta in January 1946 to await the seaborne transportation there.⁶⁸ A Chinese advance party then went to Calcutta to set up a transit camp there for accommodating the unit.⁶⁹

As the transit camp in Calcutta was settled, the Chinese informed the British that they would leave Lahore on 28 January 1946.⁷⁰ This plan, however, was again dropped in late January on the grounds that the ship

⁶³ Ibid., 5 November 1945.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 7 November 1945.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 20 November 1945.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 18 November 1945.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 22 November 1945.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 24 December 1945.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2 January 1946.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 12 January 1946.

that was supposed to take this job was no longer available.⁷¹ Worse still, the Chinese learnt that their return would be indefinitely delayed due to the shortage of shipping availability.

After several months of waiting, on 1 May 1946, the Chinese received the information that an American ship would be docking at Calcutta on 8 May en route to Shanghai. Since the British shipping was still unavailable, the Chinese had pinned great hopes on this American ship, even though their knowledge of this ship was rather scanty. It was decided to dispatch 100 personnel to Calcutta to await the ship.⁷² This decision, however, agitated others who were left behind. To prevent a looming mutiny among the remaining personnel, the Chinese superintendent of the LEFTS had to cancel the plan and promised they would all leave for China together.⁷³

Indeed, the risk of mutiny among the Chinese in Lahore was far from an exaggeration. Chinese senior officials in Lahore repeatedly warned the British that they were unable to maintain the discipline of their cadets in the school.⁷⁴ In the course of waiting for the transport, the morale of the Chinese in the LEFTS dramatically declined. As the war was over, the Chinese were hurrying to return to China after being separated from their families for several years. Contrary to their expectations, they were left behind for more than six months with minimal provisions and restrictions on their movement. The unhappy and disappointed Chinese even had fights with local Indian policemen for not allowing them to enter an Indian village for entertainment.⁷⁵ The Chinese in Lahore were unable to figure out why the British could not arrange a ship for them for such a long time.

The Royal Indian Navy Mutiny

On the morning of 19 January 1946, around 1,000 British Royal Air Force servicemen had gathered on the parade ground at Drigh Road Station in

⁷¹ Ibid., 31 January 1946.

⁷² Ibid., 1 May 1946.

⁷³ Ibid., 4 May 1946.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 21 March 1946; TNA, AIR 395/1, Operation Record Book, RAF Liaison Office Chinese EFTS, 13 April 1946.

⁷⁵ TNA, AIR 395/1, Operation Record Book, RAF Liaison Office Chinese EFTS, 27 February 1946.

Karachi. They were ordered to take part in a parade with heavy woollen uniforms of tunic and trousers (the blue uniform) before inspecting their kit and equipment. On that very morning, however, none of them wore the blue uniform but rather their casual khaki uniforms, and they were not willing to parade.⁷⁶ When approached by the officers, these men expressed their frustration over their delayed demobilization after the Second World War and their grievance of not being able to return to Britain quickly.⁷⁷ A delegation of the Air Commodore in Delhi was dispatched to Karachi to address the crisis. The petition of these servicemen in Karachi, asking to forward their complaints about repatriation and demobilization to the Air Ministry in London, was accepted by the authorities.⁷⁸

Since the Second World War ended in August 1945, most British servicemen in Asia had assumed that they would be demobilized and taken back to Britain to reunite with their families. This presumption, however, turned out to be unsound as they were told by the authorities that there were not enough ships for the repatriation mission. Although it was a fact that shipping transportation was in extreme shortage immediately after the war, few servicemen at that time accepted this explanation, as tension and frustration stockpiled day by day.⁷⁹

The Drigh Road incident was, therefore, the trigger of a series of strikes among the RAF servicemen in Asia in January 1946. News of the strike in Drigh Road and its subsequent success soon spread to more than 60 stations across South and Southeast Asia, such as the Negombo Station in Ceylon, the Cawnpore Station in Uttar Pradesh, the Dum Dum Station in Calcutta, and the Seletar Station in Singapore. Servicemen at these stations had their own strikes and raised similar demands—to have a fast demobilization and to be taken back to Britain as soon as possible.⁸⁰ Most of these strikes were successful in meeting their objectives, as large numbers of British servicemen had been demobilized and repatriated to Britain by February 1946.⁸¹ The effort of comforting the British servicemen and

⁷⁶ David Duncan, *Mutiny in the RAF: The Air Force Strikes of 1946* (London: Socialist History Society, 1999), 7–14.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 22–23.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 27–33.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

transporting them back to Britain, however, further burdened the already overworked shipping lines. While addressing the RAF strikes, India's chief air marshal, Sir Roderick Carr, warned, 'such actions can only encourage civil disturbances and may lead to grave consequences for everyone in India.'⁸² Grave consequences did occur one month later.

During the Second World War, the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) was greatly expanded for the sake of defending the Indian coasts from a possible Japanese seaborne invasion. By the end of the war, there were around 30,000 Indian officers, sailors, and servicemen in the RIN.⁸³ As the war was over, a large-scale demobilization of the Indians in the RIN was prioritized by the British authorities. Facing an uncertain future and frustrated by their dismal treatment in the navy (poor living conditions, inadequate pay, lousy food, and discrimination from British officers), the agitation and anger spread widely.⁸⁴

On the afternoon of 18 February 1946, one month after the strike of the RAF in Karachi, Indian cadets and sailors in the signals school HMIS *Talwar* in Bombay refused to take their duties and took over the establishment because they were insulted by their British commander. A central strike committee was soon set up in *Talwar* and demanded better payment and allowances, improved living conditions and food quality, and good behaviour of British officers.⁸⁵

Since the HMIS *Talwar* was a wireless communications training school, the striking sailors there had been able to use wireless communications to spread the news and called for other RIN units to join the strike. In a few days, Indian RIN sailors in Calcutta, Madras, and Karachi responded to the appeal by either refusing duties or taking over navy ships and shore establishments.⁸⁶ Before the strike had finally been put down by the British on 23 February, a total of 10,000 servicemen and 60 ships of the RIN were involved.⁸⁷ Such a large-scale strike of the navy in almost all

⁸² Daniel Owen Spence, 'Beyond *Talwar*: A Cultural Reappraisal of the Royal Indian Navy Mutiny', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43:3 (2015): 500.

⁸³ Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, *Sea Power and Indian Security* (London: Brassey's, 1995), 18–19.

⁸⁴ BL, IOR: L/MIL/17/9/379, Report of the RIN Commission of Enquiry, 37–38; Ronald Spector, 'The Royal Indian Navy Strike of 1946: A Study of Cohesion and Disintegration in Colonial Armed Forces', *Armed Forces and Society* 7:2 (1981): 271–284.

⁸⁵ Ronald Spector, 'The Royal Indian Navy Strike of 1946', 30–35.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 28–30.

⁸⁷ TNA, ADM 1/21104, from Miles to Admiralty, 14 January 1948.

important ports across the region greatly disrupted seaborne transportation in British India. British warships in Southeast Asia were dispatched to India's main ports to keep the defiance at bay, while civilian ships were restricted from leaving or approaching those ports in trouble.⁸⁸

On 21 February 1946, when the RIN strike was at its height, the Superintendent of the LEFTS Col. M. C. Liu, who had no knowledge of the strike at that time and was frustrated over the delay of the ship that was supposed to take the Chinese back home, went to Delhi in person to figure out why there was no available shipping for the Chinese. The British did not give him any solid explanation but only stated that there would be no ship for the Chinese in the foreseeable future.⁸⁹ Unexpectedly, although the British authorities, the Chinese Nationalist government, and the Chinese cadets and officers in Lahore all desired an immediate return, their homecoming journey was repeatedly thwarted by the chaotic situation in India as the British Raj was coming to an end.

Conclusion

On 18 May 1946, the British authorities informed the Chinese in the LEFTS that a British ship in Madras would be available to take them back to China in early June.⁹⁰ Although the distance between Lahore and Madras was very long, the Chinese were delighted to know that they had finally secured a ship and accepted this proposal. On 28 May, around 600 Chinese cadets and officers, together with their heavy kits, were boarded a train for Madras. They arrived in Madras on 3 June and embarked on the SS *Chitral*, which was bound for Shanghai.⁹¹ The LEFTS, after four years of functioning, came to an end. While the Chinese were going home, the fate of the British Raj was sealed as a chaotic and bloody partition was looming. And what awaited them back in China was a full-scale civil war in which millions of people would perish.

⁸⁸ Daniel Owen Spence, 'Beyond *Tahwar*', 489–508.

⁸⁹ TNA, AIR 395/1, Operation Record Book, RAF Liaison Office Chinese EFTS, 22 February 1946.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18 May 1946.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 7 June 1946.

The war facilitated the cross-boundary mobility of personnel, supplies, and institutions through militarized corridors such as the Burma Road and the Hump. As this book has already demonstrated, Chinese merchants, soldiers, officials, and professionals travelled between India and China via either the Burma Road or the Hump. As the war ended, however, chaos across Asia disrupted the militarized transnational corridors and led to the delayed return of the Chinese sojourners. The overstay of the Chinese sojourners in Calcutta and Lahore, in its turn, showcases the long-assumed national events, such as the December 1st Incident in Kunming, the RIN Mutiny, and the Chinese Civil War, were entangled and intertwined from the perspective of ordinary people. Such an approach to these events that we used to analyse within national frameworks further convinces us that the stories of the Chinese sojourners in wartime Raj would be helpful for us to reimagine the modern history of India and China from transnational and subaltern angles.

6

Conclusion

Inheriting the Colonial Anxieties

In October 1947, Liu Yiling, the Secretary-General of the Kuomintang headquarters in India, was issued a deportation order from the Ministry of Home Affairs of the newly independent Indian government. The Indian government further specified that the cause of the deportation was that Liu Yiling was found guilty of several breaches of Indian laws and regulations, including overstaying without reporting to the Indian immigration officials and connections with local gambling and smuggling businesses.¹

These accusations, however, were firmly rejected by Liu Yiling. The Chinese Consul General at Calcutta also asked the Indian government to reconsider this case. They believed that the accusations against Liu Yiling were fabricated by certain British officers used in Indian intelligence sectors, who had long discriminated against the Chinese. As India had been an independent country, the Chinese authorities assumed that the Indian government should not be influenced by colonial discrimination and should review the case.²

Contrary to the Chinese assumption, however, the Indian government maintained the deportation issue and even further accused Liu Yiling of engaging in certain secret anti-India activities in India.³ Shocked by the prosecution, Liu Yiling wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Indian government. He argued that he was invited by the Government of India to come to Calcutta to organize the Chinese Seamen's Wartime Service Corps in 1942. In Calcutta, he took the position of the director of the Corps. Also, he worked as the chief

¹ AH, 020-011908-0001, Waijiaobu, Liuyiling beiyindupolinglijingdeng, 2 November 1947.

² Ibid., 3 November 1947.

³ Ibid., 12 December 1947.

editor of a Chinese language newspaper, the *Chinese Journal of India*, before he was appointed as the Secretary-General of the KMT headquarters in India. He highlighted that he spared no effort to promote the friendship between the Chinese and Indians and wrote many articles to support the cause of Indian independence. Now that India had already obtained its independence, Liu Yiling asked how could the independent Indian government deport a long-time supporter of the Indian nationalist movement by accusing him of engaging anti-India activities.⁴ The Indian government, however, did not accept Liu Yiling's appeal and deported him in June 1948.⁵

Liu Yiling's case indicates that both the colonial and postcolonial Indian states took quite similar attitudes towards the Chinese sojourners. As the stories of this book have already shown, the experiences of the Chinese seamen, smugglers, deserters, pilots in wartime India, and the Chinese authorities' nation-building projects of disciplining and training them in that country, stimulated the British anxieties. As a response, the British authorities employed several former colonial police officers who used to work in Malaya, Hong Kong, and Shanghai and knew the Chinese language. Local Chinese Indians were also recruited to infiltrate suspicious Chinese organizations to gather information. A vast intelligence network across South Asia was then built during the Second World War to collect information regarding almost all aspects of the economic, social, and political activities of the Chinese sojourners and settlers.

In the case of Liu Yiling, William Gardener (who was a colonial police officer in Malaya before the outbreak of the Pacific War and knew Mandarin and Cantonese well), the deputy director of the Calcutta police in the last days of the British colonial rule, employed some Chinese Indians to went down to the Chinatowns in Calcutta to collect information of Liu Yiling in an effort to prosecute him. The accusations against Liu Yiling in 1947 were generally based on the information reported by these agents during the colonial period. Even after Liu Yiling's deportation, the agents were still active in watching Liu's wife, who was still in Calcutta at that time.⁶

⁴ Ibid., 1 March 1948.

⁵ Ibid., 7 July 1948.

⁶ NAI, External Affairs, Progs., Nos. 612(3)-CJK, 1949, 'Review of the Chinese Activities in India, July 1948 to June 1949', 5.

C.A. Bayly, in his study of the intelligence gathering and social communication in British India, demonstrates that the British authorities had developed a sophisticated intelligence-gathering network in the early nineteenth century to secure its position in South Asia. Nevertheless, misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the gathered information constantly strengthened the feelings of uncertainty and anxiety amongst colonial officials.⁷ The intelligence gathered against the Chinese sojourners by the British during the Second World War, along with the anxieties caused by these intelligence, were passed onto the hands of the independent Indian government after 1947.⁸ The Indian government soon found that it was facing similar Chinese problems that the British worked hard to address before the end of the colonial rule.

Although most Chinese seamen trapped in India during the war had left after 1945, some others kept arriving to engage in smuggling. Around 1947, a vast disparity in the gold price appeared between India and China. One could purchase gold at the price of Rs. 80 per tola (one tola is around 11grams) in Hong Kong and sell them in Calcutta at Rs. 110 per tola. Many Chinese seamen joined this business and smuggled gold into India for sale. The smuggling of gold reached such a large scale that the Indian government came to worry about the deposit of its currency.⁹ Additionally, the Indian government was also concerned about a possible large influx of Chinese refugees. The turmoil Chinese civil war in the late 1940s turned tens of thousands of the Chinese into refugees who tried to flee their war-torn country. As a response, the British government in Hong Kong and Malaya tightened restrictions on immigration, and Thailand dramatically reduced the Chinese immigration quota. Considering the conflicts in Burma and Indochina made them not very attractive to the Chinese, the Indian government thought that India might have become the only country neighbouring China that the Chinese could come. Information that indicated certain illegal gangs that

⁷ Bayly, *Empire and Information*.

⁸ Tansen Sen finds that the basic structure of intelligence sharing within India continued after Indian independence in 1947 and that the intelligence files on certain subjects and individuals remained active despite the replacement of British intelligence officers with native ones, see Sen, 'The Chinese Intrigue in Kalimpong', 413.

⁹ NAI, External Affairs, Progs., Nos. 612(3)-CJK, 1949, 'Review of the Chinese Activities in India, July 1948 to June 1949', 34.

were running the business of trafficking Chinese refugees into India from Burma further increased the anxieties of the Indian authorities.¹⁰

In addition to the Chinese smugglers and refugees, the Indian government (both colonial and postcolonial) also found that the Chinese schools in Calcutta, Bombay, Darjeeling, and Kalimpong were highly suspicious.¹¹ The first Chinese school in India (later known as the Meiguang School) was founded in the Bowbazar Chinatown at Calcutta by the city's Hakka Chinese in 1919 to provide primary-level and junior middle-school level education. In the 1930s, the school was officially recognized by the Chinese Nationalist government.¹² Before the Indian independence, a few other Chinese schools were also set up in Calcutta (mostly in the Bowbazar Chinatown).¹³ During the Second World War, the Meiguang School established branches in Darjeeling and Kalimpong to provide education to the children of the Chinese refugees.¹⁴ Among all of these schools, the Jianguo School, which was proposed by the Nationalist government in 1943, maybe the biggest and most influential one. Directly instructed by the Ministry of Education of the Nationalist government, the Jianguo School vowed to train its students into patriots who would contribute to constructing their Chinese motherland. The Chinese national flags were hung in the school, and Sun Yat-sen's portraits were on the walls of all classrooms.¹⁵ Other Chinese schools in India soon followed the pattern set by the Jianguo School. During the colonial rule, the British authorities had already worried that these Chinese schools could be used by the Chinese Nationalist government to expand its influence and establish extraterritoriality for its citizens in India.¹⁶ The Indian government succeeded

¹⁰ Ibid., 23-24.

¹¹ There were eight Chinese schools in India in 1948.

¹² Chen Dixin ed., *Yindu jiacheng meiguang xuexiao niankan* (Annual Issue of the Meiguang School in Calcutta, India) (Calcutta: Yindu baoshe, 1936), in Zhang Xing, *The Chinese Community in Calcutta*, 140-141.

¹³ Including Zhonghua School (est. 1922), Zhenhua School (est. 1926), Zhongshan School (est. 1933), and Peimei School (est. 1934, this school was in Tangra instead of Bowbazar), and the Sacred Heart Catholic Chinese School (est. 1936).

¹⁴ Xing, *The Chinese Community in Calcutta*, 141.

¹⁵ *Yindu jia'ergeda jianguo xuexiao wu zhounian jinian tekan* (Special Issue Marking the Fifth Anniversary of the Jianguo School in Calcutta, India) (Calcutta: Yindu ribaoshe, 1949), 6-7, in Xing, *The Chinese Community in Calcutta*, 148-149.

¹⁶ NAI, Home_Political_E_1945_NA_F-16-49, from J. R. deChazal to A. W. Lovatt, 30 January 1945.

the British anxieties over the Chinese schools and further believed that the Chinese communists have infiltrated into the schools and tried to build them into their propaganda strongholds.¹⁷

The Indian government's suspicions and anxieties over the activities of the Chinese in India went well into the 1950s. In analysing the reports produced by the Intelligence Branch of West Bengal in West Bengal State Archives, Tansen Sen finds that the Indian government kept its eyes closely on the activities of the Chinese in India throughout the 1950s. In Kalimpong, a trading town neighbouring Tibet, the Indian government developed an extensive intelligence gathering and surveillance network to watch the activities of the Chinese residents there. Reports of the intelligence agents and local informants indicate that the Indian government had been particularly concerned about the pro-communist activities of the Chinese residents in Kalimpong since 1949. Chang Xiufeng, a Chinese artist who came to India to learn and teach painting in 1947, had been under the surveillance of the Indian intelligence agents since 1949 for alleged pro-communist attitude. Throughout the 1950s, the Indian government kept investigating Chang Xiufeng, suspecting him of promoting communism among the overseas Chinese, setting up an underground communist network, and collecting intelligence for the Chinese government. When the Sino-India relations deteriorated in the late 1950s, Chang Xiufeng was immediately tagged by the Indian government as an agent working for the Chinese government and was arrested, prosecuted, and deported.¹⁸

The Indian government's deep anxieties over the Chinese activities in India and its consistent surveillance, investigations, prosecutions, and deportations of suspected Chinese individuals in the 1950s contradicted the grand narratives of the Sino-Indian relations before the 1962 war. Arunabh Ghosh finds that most studies of the Sino-Indian relations in the 1950s tend to focus on the topics such as the sign of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence Treaty of 1954, the Bandung Conference of 1955, the uprisings in Tibet, the Dalai Lama's flight to India in 1959, and the border dispute throughout the decade. The overemphasis on these grand

¹⁷ NAI, External Affairs, Progs., Nos. 612(3)-CJK, 1949, 'Review of the Chinese Activities in India, July 1948 to June 1949', 2.

¹⁸ Sen, 'The Chinese Intrigue in Kalimpong', 410–459.

narratives may be attributed to the scholarly obsession with the causes, course, and consequences of the Sino-Indian War of 1962.

These narratives, however, leave general readers an impression that the relationship between the Republic of India (ROI) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) had a happy beginning but only turned bad when the issue of geopolitics surfaced in the late 1950s. Arunabh Ghosh contends that there is a range of actors, agents, events, and processes between India and China in the 1950s that cannot be appropriated into the grand narratives of the India-China history. The activities of the friendship associations, the cultural delegations and exhibitions, the trade discussions, the scientific exchanges, and the film screenings between the two countries in the 1950s, as Arunabh Ghosh argues, indicate that the grand narrative chronology of India-China history oversimplifies the much-complicated interactions between China and India at that time.¹⁹

Tansen Sen also finds it difficult to make sense of the transition from the 'Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai' friendship in the 1950s to the conflicts in the 1960s by referring to the grand narratives of India-China history. Through analysing the archives of the Intelligence Branch of the Indian government, Tansen Sen uncovers that the 'Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai' is by no means the whole story of the India-China relations in the 1950s. Instead, he describes the main feature of the first decade of ROC-PRC interactions as a mixture of ambivalence and suspicions. The Indian government's friendly engagement with the PRC in the 1950s is merely one side of the whole story.²⁰

Since taking office in 1950, the director of the Intelligence Bureau of India, Bhola Nath Mullik, had developed strong suspicion of possible infiltration by the Chinese communists into India and ordered surveillance of the ethnic Chinese communities across the country. Detailed particulars of almost all influential Chinese living in India were collected, and those who were suspected of being communist agents were monitored closely.²¹

¹⁹ Arunabh Ghosh, 'Before 1962: The Case for 1950s China-India History', *Journal of Asian Studies* 76:3 (2017): 697–727.

²⁰ Sen, *India, China, and the World*, 380–433.

²¹ B. N. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1971), 154.

In addition to the anxieties within the government circle, Indian intellectuals also expressed their concern over the existence of the Chinese population in India. In the early 1950s, the chief editor of *Times of India*, Frank Moraes, and the artist, Raja Hutheesing, who was also Nehru's brother-in-law, both warned that the Chinese communist government would use the Chinese migrants in India to intervene India's domestic politics.²²

It is this undercurrent of anxieties and suspicions and the intelligence work since the beginning of the diplomatic relationship between the two countries that led to the prosecution and deportation of influential Chinese individuals such as Chang Xiufeng in the early 1960s when the India-China relationships deteriorated and the detainment of several thousand Chinese Indians after the outbreak of the Sino-Indian war in 1962.²³ In this sense, it seems that there is an obvious continuity instead of break regarding the India-China relations in the 1950s and 1960s. Tansen Sen points out that the Indian government's cautious attitudes towards China after 1950 can be attributed to the ambiguous status of Tibet and the unsettled issue of border demarcation during the British colonial period.²⁴ This book shows that the Indian government's treatment of the Chinese sojourners in the 1950s and 1960s is not merely a result of its geopolitical concerns. The existence of the Chinese communities in India actually strengthened the Indian imagination of the Chinese threat. And that imagination was directly inherited from the British colonial authorities' interactions with the Chinese sojourners during the Second World War. In other words, the British passed their intelligence, institutions, as well as anxieties with regard to the Chinese sojourners onto the hands and minds of the Indian elites after the independence. The detailed reports of the colonial intelligence agents in the

²² Raja Hutheesing, *The Great Peace: An Asia's Candid Report on Red China* (New York: Harper, 1953), 9; Frank Moraes, *Report on Mao's China* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 174.

²³ Since the outbreak of the Sino-Indian war in October 1962, the Indian government had detained around 2,000 Chinese Indians and interned them in the Deoli Detention Camp in Rajasthan. The detained Chinese were released between 1964 and 1966, most of whom chose to leave the country for Canada. For the experience of the Chinese detained in Deoli, see Joy Ma and Dilip D'Souza, *The Deoli Wallahs: The True Story of the 1962 Chinese-Indian Internment* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2020); Kwai-Yun Li, 'Deoli Camp'; Ming Tung Hsieh, *A Lost Tribe* (London: Author House, 2011); Banerjee, 'Chinese Indians in Fire', 437–463.

²⁴ Sen, *India, China, and the World*, 383.

1940s that recorded the activities of the Chinese smugglers, deserters, spies, refugees, and sailors in India, together with the colonial geopolitical concerns, have fundamentally shaped the Indian government's policies towards the Chinese government and the Chinese sojourners in India alike from the 1950s onwards.

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